

**United Nations  
Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)  
Expert Group Meeting  
Achievements, gaps and challenges  
in linking the implementation  
of the Beijing Platform for Action and  
the Millennium Declaration and  
Millennium Development Goals  
Baku, Azerbaijan  
7 to 11 February 2005**

**Achievements and Challenges in Linking the Implementation of the  
Beijing Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of All  
Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Millennium  
Development Goals**

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Millennium Declaration, an unprecedented global consensus by United Nations Member States, Development Agencies, etc., presents a vision for improving the condition of humanity throughout the world in the areas of sustainable development, poverty eradication, peace and security, human rights and democracy.

The set of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets and indicators are an important political outcome of the Millennium Summit. It is an essential platform for pressing for the renewal of national commitments and the fulfilment of political pledges on gender equality, as well as serving as benchmarks for measuring progress and holding governments accountable for commitments made.

Since gender equality has been declared in the Millennium Declaration as a Goal on its own, and bearing in mind that the MDGs represent the consolidation of such important international documents as the Beijing Platform for Action (Platform), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Cairo Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the MDGs are an entry point for up-scaling national measures towards implementation of Beijing and CEDAW commitments, not only through Goal 3 on gender equality and empowerment of women, but also by mainstreaming gender in all MDGs. Thus, the MDGs should be treated not as a new political agenda, but more as a vehicle for further CEDAW and Beijing reaffirmation and implementation. The strategies used in the past for promoting gender equality can be up-scaled and utilized in strategies to achieve MDGs: all three processes can become mutually supportive.

This paper presents one of several practices supported by UNIFEM of how the MDG process, Beijing and CEDAW can be used to promote gender equality within the higher-level framework of policy analysis and development planning at national level. It outlines challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equality using the MDGs at national level, and is based on the findings of government and civil society initiatives implemented in Kyrgyzstan. However, this and other examples of using MDGs to promote gender equality and linking to Beijing implementation do not exhaust the pool of other possible opportunities and the Baku Expert Meeting could provide further instances of good practice. Besides this, it is crucial to note that the example described hereafter is first step of larger, long-term process taking place in this country, which, we hope, will be successfully finalized.

## **II. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN LINKING BEIJING AND MDGS**

In most of the CIS countries, National Action Plans to follow up Beijing commitments have been placed in the lowest rank of national priorities. These Action plans were often not supported by sufficient human and financial resources. Consequently, National Machineries responsible for implementation of the Action Plans had neither strong authority nor sufficient capacities and financial means to respond meaningfully to the urgent needs, poverty and the economic status of women, which could be effectively addressed only through a coherent multisectoral approach.

CEDAW is one of important legal tools for mobilizing government and civil society to trace regularly the country's progress on gender-related development. All countries in the CIS have ratified CEDAW. However, while there have been initiatives attempting to increase national capacity for CEDAW monitoring and advocacy, there remains a gap between theory and practice, requiring search for innovative approaches that will increase effectiveness of the Convention for guarding women human rights.

MDGs, becoming a powerful political tool, does not bring a new agenda, but reinforces member states commitments towards Beijing, CEDAW and other international documents implementation, thus, turning these processes into mutually beneficial ones. The global character of the MDGs, which raised concerns among the gender equality advocates that far-reaching obligations and commitments of CEDAW and Beijing have been poorly represented, allows for localizing and operationalizing the global targets to

adequately respond to the country specific situation and development needs. And in this context, CEDAW, Beijing and other international documents, in turn, can be used to fine-tune MDG agenda at national level.

To be more specific, we would like to highlight the following opportunities in linking MDGs, Beijing and other documents:

- *MDGs represent a mechanism for assessing progress and holding stakeholders accountable* towards their political commitments. MDGs provide an important tool for consolidating government and civil society efforts around the set of clearly outlined goals, targets and indicators. This allows up-scaling gender concerns, which have been already identified in CEDAW and Beijing documents, to the higher policy level.
- *Globally institutionalized MDGs reporting process* provides greater opportunities for civil society to pressurize the government to be more accountable for fulfilment of the commitments towards gender equality, which again correspond with the priorities identified in the CEDAW and Beijing documents.
- *Mainstreaming gender into national and sectoral development programmes and policies* is to take place due to multi-dimensional nature of MDGs. The MDGs, requiring the reporting on a wide range of issues, call for multi-sectoral approach and involvement of representatives from different ministries. Such need could contribute to streamlining and strengthening the mechanism for monitoring, making the sectoral ministries and agencies be accountable for reporting on certain indicators. Thus, the process of reporting on the MDGs could be used as an entry point for mainstreaming gender in national programmes and policies for implementation of CEDAW and BPFA.
- *Many effective strategies for achieving gender equality have been developed* on the past several decades through efforts to implement CEDAW and Beijing, and these proven approaches *can be up-scaled and utilized in strategies to achieve the MDGs.*
- The multi-dimensional nature of the MDGs could contribute to the *strengthening of coordination mechanisms between civil society and government* as it provides an excellent entry point for bringing together partners and agencies for holding on the discussions around gender equality issues and priorities.
- *MDGs is also an excellent advocacy tool*, as it provides clearly defined targets and indicators, with the timeframe and benchmarks. In this regard aligning CEDAW and Beijing indicators with the MDGs would help in attracting greater attention and better opportunities for up-scaling gender equality issues to higher policy agenda and monitoring of gender issues.
- *The MDGs provide an entry point for improving the national capacity for statistics.* The MDGs can be used as a pressing requirement for improvement of statistical sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis, which in turn can be also used for promotion and advocating the CEDAW and Beijing priorities.
- *The MDGs could be used as analytical tool for making comparative analysis* on the baseline indicators and the progress made by countries within the region. Such comparative analysis would assess the country's progress vs. other countries in the regions/global, which gives additional pressing arguments in the hands of gender advocates for mobilizing government to undertake relevant measures towards gender equality.

### III. GOOD PRACTICES IN LINKING BEIJING AND MDGS

The following examples, we hope, would illustrate the possible ways in which MDGs are implemented through the lens of CEDAW and Beijing.

## KYRGYZSTAN: GENDER POLICY MONITORING

### *Background*

In 2004 the National Machinery in Kyrgyzstan (Secretariat to the National Council on Gender equality and empowerment of women under the President's Administration) approached UNIFEM with a request to support its initiative on *harmonization of reporting and monitoring processes* in its implementation of the *BPFA*, the *CEDAW* and the *MDGs*, and *to align* it with the main *National development strategy for Poverty Reduction* (PRSP). The initiative aims to develop an effective national mechanism for mainstreaming gender into national plans and socio-economic programmes (PRSP and other sectoral programmes). In doing so, the MDGs and Kyrgyzstan's Beijing commitments were used as a political platform, while CEDAW was applied as a legal basis, putting all gender and women's human rights concerns high on the national political agenda.

Kyrgyzstan is at the stage of preparing the second PRSP. This fact provides an important entry point for critical evaluation of the findings and lessons learned gained through the implementation of the first PRSP, and among other important findings, to emphasize for the need to harmonize different sectoral strategies. This is also an important momentum for reiterating the importance of gender aware policies, strategies and programmes, to be done at the outset of policy planning process, and this is how to place gender equality issues as an integral and indispensable element of any sectoral programme.

### *The Process*

The first step was formation of the *group of experts* from sectoral ministries, academia and NGOs. The process led by the Secretariat involved major GFPs from governmental ministries/departments and NGO experts. The intension was to make process as inclusive as possible, therefore the major communicating lines laid through the Extended Gender Theme Group comprising of a large group of stakeholders, dealing with gender issues.

The expert group has been responsible for the *review of a set of materials*<sup>1</sup> and preparation of the necessary grounds for development of coordinated and coherent monitoring and reporting mechanism. A *matrix* was developed to help the experts align gender indicators to create one coherent monitoring tool that could be used to track the progress of gender developments of different country processes, such as the PRSP implementation, sectoral strategies and programmes.

The following step aimed at organization of the *workshop* involving major counterparts and gender experts to *develop the set of harmonised set of gender indicators and gender monitoring system*. Working in three groups (social, political and economic) the workshop participants screened through the sets of indicators available for the MDGs, the PRSP, the BPFA and the CEDAW, and tried to harmonise them by grouping the indicators around the MDGs within three categories: 1 - mandatory indicators; 2 – recommended indicators; 3 – optional indicators. Another important outcome of the workshop was that the participants have discussed and agreed on the proposal for a structure of gender monitoring mechanism that was intended to be further discussed at the extended meeting, represented by a wider group of partners.

*Extended meeting* discussed the results of workshop and developed recommendations for *finalization of gender indicators and monitoring mechanism*. The meeting was widely attended by the representatives from major ministries, government agencies, Prime Minister's office, President's Administration, UN Agencies, donor organizations and civil society, what allowed for high efficiency of the discussion. Each indicator was considered and validated from the point of view of applicability, feasibility, cost efficiency and its co-relation to global indicators. To a large extent the debates were concentrated around the recommended and optional indicators, as they were mostly represented as qualitative indicators, which imply high human and financial

<sup>1</sup> This set of materials included: MDG report of the Kyrgyz Republic; NPRSP documents; the paper on: "Linkages between MDGs, Beijing Platform for action, B+5 outcome document and CEDAW", Beijing+10 Report of Kyrgyz Republic; the paper on "CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs - A Pathway to Action for Gender Equality"; second CEDAW report of Kyrgyz republic, "Women and Men" 2003 (Gender disaggregated statistic brochure); Gender Indicators for the Common Country Assessment.

investments. While the mandatory indicators, most of which are already being collected by the National Statistics committee were commented mainly with regard to its formulation. The debates on the sources of information, which lay in the competencies of different ministries revealed the need for actions to strengthen monitoring system within government agencies.

### ***Next Steps***

***Work on finalization of the set of gender indicators*** was undertaken by the group of gender experts in close consultation with the GFPs in the ministries. The finalised set of indicators was further disseminated among the partners for commenting. Based on the feedbacks received the gender monitoring materials will be prepared for presenting at the ***National Forum***, planed to be conducted in 2005. It is envisaged that at the National Forum the initiative for gender monitoring system will attain high political endorsement, resulting in issuance of government resolution to obligate sectoral ministries systematic pursuing gender issues in their planning and monitoring processes.

Another future prospective would be ***documenting Kyrgyzstan experience*** by clarifying interconnections between the MDGs, the CEDAW, and the Beijing. It would provide the basis for a systematic debate with the government and other partners to overcome the existing concerns for fragmented policy making and strategies monitoring, especially in relation to gender monitoring which is marginalised to the level of separate and stand alone National Action Plan. Therefore the intention is to take stock of the experience that has been gained in Kyrgyzstan that was the first in the region to undertake the initiative to develop the harmonised system of gender monitoring making the synergy between the MDGs, the PRSP, the BPFA and the CEDAW monitoring and reporting processes, and put all efforts towards possible replication of this positive experience in other countries in the region.

### ***Conclusion***

The core of Kyrgyzstan experience in using MDGs lays in developing a unified approach to making gender equality an integral part of national policy, and how this could result in the renewal of national commitments to the BPFA and CEDAW that will help to stress the importance of interconnections with national and local development strategies, implementation and monitoring mechanisms and inter-sectoral co-ordination.

The experience of Kyrgyzstan in making an attempt for harmonized gender monitoring is at its middle stage, and yet early to assess the effectiveness of the final outcome of the process. However, the responsiveness of major counterparts to the idea and the readiness they demonstrated at all stages, show that the initiative is timely, which echoes with the emerging needs at country's policy and development processes.