



# TWO ROADS, ONE GOAL

Dual Strategy for Gender Equality Programming in the  
Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund

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Cover: Children from the Dong minority of Congjiang County, Guizhou province in southwestern China. (Photo: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

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# FOREWORD

The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) was created with the support of the Government of Spain, continuing the history of multi-lateral cooperation. In December 2012, the Cabinet of Spain approved the fourth Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation for 2013–2016, contextualizing it in the international development agenda, including the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and the new post-2015 development agenda. The plan also addressed the challenges of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the European Union agenda for change and G20 development agreements.

In this context, women's rights and the integration of a gender perspective are the hallmarks of Spanish cooperation, thus strengthening the commitment that began with the approval of Law 23/1998 on international cooperation and subsequent development plans.

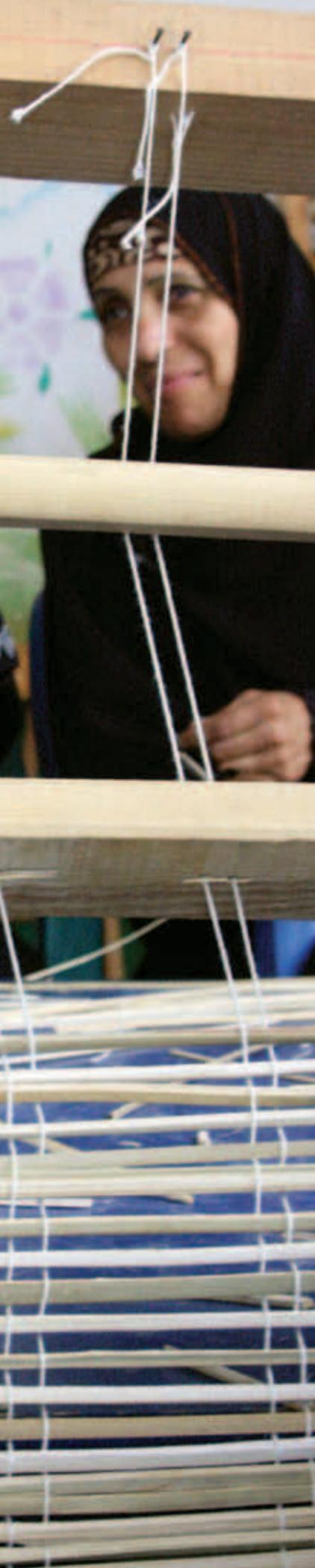
In a particularly difficult time for the international community, Spain is committed to contributing to human development, assisting in poverty eradication and promoting the full realization of human rights, while strengthening the integration of gender-specific programmes and, when necessary, continuing to support existing programmes serving specific groups of women.

This explains the work performed under the MDG-F Gender Thematic Window, which involved an investment of \$90 million, and the efforts to integrate gender concerns across the Fund's other thematic windows, with lessons learned for consolidating this work in the future. Promoting a dual strategy to ensure access to rights and freedoms for all women also represents Spain's commitment to multilateral cooperation for development.

Gonzalo Robles  
Secretary-General of International  
Development Cooperation, Spain



*Egyptian communities that live near Egypt's Dahshur pyramids benefit from an MDG-F joint programme that combines cultural preservation with improving livelihoods and working conditions in local creative industries, which particularly employ women and young people.*



# PREFACE

Established through a landmark agreement between the Government of Spain and the United Nations with the aim of accelerating development progress, the MDG Achievement Fund has leveraged the collective strength of the United Nations system and its partners to support national efforts toward achieving the MDGs. Causes of the multi-dimensional development challenges such efforts seek to address are rooted in the power relations, attitudes, beliefs and social norms that characterize countries and preclude some citizens from asserting their fundamental human rights. Gender-based discrimination, at the heart of this rights denial in many countries, results in profound socioeconomic inequalities and curtails the tremendous potential of the world's women and girls.

The MDG-F joint programme design and implementation model exemplifies the Fund's approach to addressing gender-related inequalities by factoring in their fundamental causes and prioritizing concrete interventions to empower the most excluded and vulnerable. *Two Roads, One Goal* details the dual MDG-F gender-equality strategy that stems from international commitments: a portfolio of 13 targeted joint programmes that promote gender equality as a central goal, and a gender-mainstreaming effort within 117 MDG-F joint programmes targeting other development areas—in line with its commitment to gender equality as a prerequisite for achieving all MDGs.

As part of an ongoing knowledge-management effort, MDG-F sought to identify the key successes and challenges of this dual gender equality strategy. The Fund partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to collaboratively assess key achievements and lessons, with UNDP reviewing the results of gender-targeted MDG-F programmes and UN Women focusing on gender mainstreaming in programmes funded through other thematic windows. By applying performance indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment, endorsed by the United Nations Development Group, interviewing programme teams and stakeholders, conducting in-depth research and desk review, and analysing the findings, the two teams examined the extent to which MDG-F joint programmes supported policies and interventions with impacts on the MDGs, developed successful and innovative models for scale-up, and ensured aid effectiveness.

*Two Roads, One Goal* presents the initial findings of the UNDP and UN Women's analyses, which endeavour to inform current debate on international development frameworks and the post-2015 agenda. The publication also presents the largest-to-date study that examines the effectiveness of combining targeted and gender-mainstreaming interventions to promote gender equality through a joint programming modality. The MDG-F Secretariat and its UNDP and UN Women colleagues hope that the findings and recommendations presented in the following pages can substantively contribute to propelling accountability and coherence of the United Nations effort to promote gender equality through joint programming.

MDG Achievement Fund Secretariat





*The Leave No Woman Behind joint programme provided women with loans and training in literacy and business skills, boosting women's self-esteem and changing gender relations in households.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) commitment to gender equality builds on more than two decades of knowledge, experience and internationally accepted norms, standards and conventions. Based on the priorities established in 1995 at the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the MDG-F adopted a dual strategy for achieving gender equality that supported both targeted gender programming and gender mainstreaming as a part of its overall funding portfolio.

MDG-F allocated \$90 million to 13 programmes under the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Window. The Fund also provided its seven other thematic windows with detailed gender-mainstreaming guidance, based on United Nations Development Group's (UNDG) guidance for gender-responsive joint programmes.

As part of its overall knowledge-management efforts, MDG-F assessed the successes and challenges in the application of this dual strategy by working with two UN-system partners: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). UNDP reviewed the Gender Thematic Window portfolio, while UN Women analysed gender mainstreaming across other MDG-F thematic areas. This publication synthesizes both reviews and aims to demonstrate the interrelated and complementary nature of targeted and cross-cutting interventions and the added development value of a dual strategy.

**THE 13 JOINT PROGRAMMES UNDER THE GENDER THEMATIC WINDOW INCORPORATED INTER-DISCIPLINARY AND MULTISECTORAL APPROACHES THAT FACILITATED HOLISTIC RESPONSES TO THE COMPLEX SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DYNAMICS THAT PERPETUATE GENDER-BASED INEQUALITIES.**

## **Gender-targeted programmes: An overview of the Gender Thematic Window**

The UNDP-conducted review demonstrated that the 13 joint programmes under the Gender Thematic Window **incorporated interdisciplinary and multisectoral approaches** that facilitated holistic responses to the complex social and cultural dynamics that perpetuate gender-based inequalities. This involved combining strategies; for example, programmes that addressed gender-based violence by promoting legislative action also partnered with non-governmental organizations to help survivors of violence access productive resources—and with the media to raise awareness of women's human rights. Work also entailed partnering with countries' finance and planning ministries and national statistics offices to create or improve existing data collection and dissemination methods and, in turn, support future policy development, planning and implementation with sex-disaggregated data.

Many joint programmes **addressed inequalities and discriminatory practices across multiple sectors**, facilitating national-level work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by ensuring the inclusion of women—particularly those living among the world's most vulnerable groups—as not only project beneficiaries but as key agents of change.

The review found that all joint programmes **experienced challenges** and attempted to learn from them. In some cases, programmes made innovative corrections and achieved both planned and unanticipated positive results. Joint gender programme quality was affected by some conceptual or **'big-picture' challenges**, such as the expectation of achieving transformational change for women and girls. Another example is that half of the programmes recognized the strategic transformational potential of engaging men and boys, but their participation during implementation has been noted as potentially problematic. **Practical challenges** faced by MDG-F programmes were linked to planning, which was constrained by an inadequate investment of time and expertise, especially in regard to the imple-



*The MDG-F joint programme Semillas ("Seeds") enables women to obtain identification documents, seed money and grants to expand their businesses in Bolivia.*

mentation and monitoring of planned approaches. The most common issues related to the quality of logical frameworks (activity-focused), management complexity or multiple partners and staff turnover.

At the same time, the review of gender-targeted MDG-F joint programmes **yielded a number of clear lessons:**

- It is critical to ensure that all partners understand how gender inequalities constrain the achievement of partners' development mandates and potential contributions.
- Absorption capacity must be accurately assessed to support effective implementation.
- Strong communication strategies that provide positive reinforcement to communities and political leaders that support gender equality are important;
- Accountability and buy-in from government and UN decision-makers can make or break programmes. It is critical to engage senior decision-makers by linking programme interventions to normative agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the CEDAW Committee concluding observations and general recommendations, legislative commitments to gender equality and national action plans.
- Technically sound programmes are more successful and have better implementation and continuity. Programmes with coherent logic chains and clear indicators are able to overcome institutional biases against 'gender and development' approaches and to build a credible base of relevant evidence.



*Nicaraguan woman trains younger generation in food handling procedures.*

The review concluded that MDG-F gender-targeted programmes **added value** to the work of development partners in a number of ways, including:

- Creating efficiency, despite challenges in management arrangement, by concentrating technical capacity and financial investment for gender in a programme hub, which enabled programme partners to build on the experience of multiple agencies while enhancing the depth and reach of prior achievements;
- Increasing awareness, capacity and effectiveness by raising the profile of gender equality as an interdisciplinary development issue and, in turn, contributing to the critical-mass effect that increases the ‘staying power’ of gender-equality discourse in the policy context;
- Generating demand for human rights and gender equality, and strengthening related legislative frameworks, thus demonstrating the understanding that achieving gender equality is a government responsibility that requires national ownership and continuous monitoring to ensure sustainability;
- Meeting women’s immediate practical needs and concurrently supporting strategic transformational change, which resulted in both parallel and, in some instances, mutually reinforcing results (such as demonstrating the potential of policy change by one community’s achievements); and
- Supporting innovation and replication with an unprecedented level of investment in gender equality, which allowed programmes to break new ground on a country-by-country basis.

## Mainstreaming gender in MDG-F thematic windows

Conducted by UN Women, this analysis of gender mainstreaming in United Nations joint programming was the most extensive to date. The analysis **relied on a matrix of 60 indicators and categories of investigation**, developed based on the UNDG-endorsed United Nations Country Team performance indicators for gender equality and empowerment, which were subsequently applied to reviewed programme documents to provide scores for programmes. By distinguishing programmes in the Gender Window from other MDG-F programmes, the analysis sought to identify differences between targeted and integrated gender-mainstreaming approaches.

The analysis also **examined the terms of reference** for seven of eight MDG-F windows (excluding the Gender Window) and concluded that the inclusion of explicit requirements or incentives to address gender equality as a part of programme design was uneven. In some cases, such as that of the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Window, there was more specific direction—building on UN Security Council resolutions and other directives—which was subsequently reflected in the high level of inclusion of gender equality in the window’s joint programmes. This window scored second highest after the Gender Window. The analysis noted that terms of reference for other windows, particularly Environment and Climate Change, lacked clear gender analysis and related guidance.

In addition, the analysis **used the MDG-F ‘Guidance for the Development of Gender-Responsive Joint Programmes’** as a framework for assessing programme documents. Findings included:

- **Situational analysis:** 39 percent of MDG-F thematic programmes outside its Gender Window completed a rigorous analysis of relevant gender issues, and more than half relied on some of type of sex-disaggregated data.
- **Gender-sensitive outcomes, outputs and indicators:** Over 60 percent of all programmes (excluding the Gender Window) did not include any reference to gender equality in outcome

statements, and 35 percent did not include this reference at the output level. Most programmes deployed their gender strategy in a more visible way at the level of activities. Approximately a quarter (24 percent) of programmes had gender-sensitive indicators at the outcome level, and 69 percent included these to track results at the output level.

- **Technical assistance:** Only a minority of programmes coordinated with gender experts, with the most common arrangement being the development of civil-society partnerships with gender-equality networks.

The analysis revealed that the types of interventions supported were similar to those used in the Gender Window, with more than two thirds of joint programmes addressing women’s economic empowerment. The second most frequent theme was women’s political participation, which focused largely on informal and local decision-making spaces. In contrast, the depth of interventions varied widely. Efforts to end violence against women, while fewer, were generally more substantial.

As was the case of gender-specific joint programmes, those in other thematic areas **experienced challenges and learned lessons** while applying the gender-mainstreaming strategy. These included:

- **Limited use of data:** A number of programmes relied on perceptions and qualitative information rather than empirical evidence in the situational analysis. Certain programmes used data but either missed the ‘people dimension’ by focusing on households as a single unit of measure or presented the information in aggregate form. Some programmes, however, used this as a push factor to fill data gaps as a part of the programme strategy;
- **Difficulties in linking gender analysis and gender equality in the results logic:** These were encountered particularly when evidence was lacking, with distinct difficulties in identifying relevant gender-responsive indicators. In many cases, the only gender strategy adopted was to name women as programme beneficiaries, most often of income-generating activities, while neither simultaneously

identifying nor addressing relevant structural inequalities. In such cases, the results logic failed to clarify why women were selected as beneficiaries or how far a given intervention would contribute to reducing the underlying causes of gender inequality, thus missing opportunities for meaningful and sustainable change.

- **Uneven involvement of technical expertise:** The active participation of dedicated gender experts—such as those of UN Women or the UNCT Gender Theme Group—was positively correlated with stronger programme planning and management for the promotion of gender equality. Such participation tended to result in a more accurate situational analysis and more coherent linkages with meaningful results frameworks and relevant national priorities than in cases of programmes that did not engage specialized expertise.
- **Limited information on gender-mainstreaming budget allocation:** Tracking finances allocated to gender mainstreaming and linking expenditures to gender-specific achievements has been identified as a good practice, most recently by the System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality and women's empowerment, put forth by UN Women and adopted by agency heads at an April 2012 meeting of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Practical implementation of such tracking, however, remains challenging. The MDG-F Conflict Prevention and Peace-building Window was the only window to require a minimum of a 15 percent programme-budget allocation to gender issues, yet coordinators expressed difficulty in tracking such commitments beyond the initial planning stage.

## Key recommendations

The parallel analyses of gender-targeted MDG-F programmes and gender mainstreaming into the Fund's other thematic-window interventions yielded key recommendations, which included:

- **Support dedicated gender-equality programming.** Programmes under the MDG-F Gender Window boast the highest scores across the board on planning for gender-equality results, demonstrating that gender-targeted programmes in general and those delivered through the Gender Window in particular are a critical part of an overall strategy to achieve gender equality.
- **Adopt standards for joint gender programmes as a UN system-wide commitment, built on lessons learned and good practices to enhance consistency and quality of future joint programmes.** The lessons learned and good practices emanating from the portfolio analysis of the Gender Window may be meshed with the findings of the future Evaluation of Joint Gender Programmes in the UN System<sup>1</sup> (led by UN Women) and triangulated with internationally recognized frameworks of analysis (for mainstreaming and empowerment) in order to develop a set of standards. System-wide standards will improve programme comparability, align with accepted indicators and improve the accuracy of monitoring and evaluating gender-equality progress resulting from joint programmes implemented over the medium to long term.
- **Strengthen accountability for gender-equality results.** MDG-F has mandated including gender-equality criteria into its programme-appraisal process and provided tools for integrating gender considerations into programme design and subsequent monitoring. However, these did not appear to have been matched by accountability mechanisms designed to ensure that guidelines were implemented consistently across MDG-F windows and individual programmes. Accountability could be strengthened by tactics such as applying the 'gender marker' approach to budget tracking,<sup>2</sup> withholding funding for non-compliance in reporting on gender-related results, or not approving programmes that do not integrate gender criteria. Programmes could also benefit from improved application of the UNCT performance indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment, as recommended in MDG-F programme-development guidance. This would have to be done at an early enough stage to enable in-progress course corrections—possibly in alignment with mid-term programme evaluations.



*MDG-F supports a Nicaragua environmental programme that addresses biodiversity preservation alongside livelihoods and access to clean water, and employs an environmental education strategy that focuses on women's roles and risk management.*

## BACKGROUND

**“THE STRATEGY OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING DOES NOT IN ANY WAY PRECLUDE THE NEED FOR SPECIFIC TARGETED INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY. THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION CALLS FOR A DUAL STRATEGY – GENDER MAINSTREAMING COMPLEMENTED WITH INPUTS DESIGNED TO ADDRESS SPECIFIC GAPS OR PROBLEMS FACED IN THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY.”<sup>3</sup>**

The MDG-F commitment to gender equality builds on more than two decades of knowledge, experience and internationally accepted norms, standards and conventions. The MDG-F decision to support both mainstreaming and targeted gender-equality programming in the framework of a dual strategy reinforces the priorities established in 1995 at the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

The Beijing Platform for Action stated: “Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.”<sup>4</sup> The Beijing negotiations resulted in an implicit understanding of the dual nature of ‘mainstreaming’ as a concept. Agreements reached included applying gender analysis to programmes specifically targeting gender equality and women’s empowerment, and fully integrating (or ‘mainstreaming’) gender analysis and action into the design and implementation of sectoral development programmes.

Following the Beijing Platform for Action and the international community’s endorsement of the MDGs, in 2005 the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality identified a number of criteria for effective promotion of gender equality. These included demonstrated political will, organizational culture that supports gender mainstreaming, enforced accountability mechanisms, technical capacity for gender and adequate resources.<sup>5</sup> Such criteria provide background for this analysis and, in broader terms, remain relevant and highlight areas of both progress and longstanding constraints and inequalities.



*Children take part in a workshop at a summer camp supported by MDG-F as part of a programme that aims to help reduce tensions between Palestinian and Lebanese communities living in North Lebanon.*

## PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this publication is to provide MDG-F and the United Nations Member States, agencies and country teams with a summary of MDG-F contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment resulting from the implementation of the Fund's dual gender-equality strategy. This publication consolidates findings and recommendations that can be used to inform decision-maker discussions on system-wide coherence for gender equality, effective collaboration and improved development and aid effectiveness—in particular through joint programming.

The information and analysis presented here address, in parallel, two distinct types of gender-related MDG-F work: gender-targeted programmes and gender mainstreaming into programmes implemented by the Fund's other thematic windows. The publication aims to demonstrate how the two elements of the MDG-F dual strategy for promoting gender equality are interrelated, complementary and of added value to broader development goals. The MDG-F Secretariat and partners also hope to stimulate thought and discussion on how this dual strategy can be applied for maximum effectiveness.

The methodology of developing this publication involved synthesizing findings from two in-depth studies conducted with MDG-F support: a portfolio analysis of the MDG-F Gender Window,<sup>6</sup> conducted by UNDP, and an analysis of gender mainstreaming in MDG-F joint programmes,<sup>7</sup> conducted by UN Women. The synthesis involved desk review of the two studies and related literature, as well as extensive consultations with UN Women and UNDP, the partner agencies that respectively oversee the MDG-F Knowledge Management Initiative on Gender as a Cross-cutting Issue and a separate initiative on the Gender Window. These initiatives are core elements of the MDG-F knowledge-management strategy established to ensure documentation of evidence, learning and information sharing.



*In Paraguay, MDG-F is supporting the Oportunidades initiative that helps domestic workers obtain basic primary education and gain access to better-paying work.*

## MDG-F COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

Established in 2007 through a landmark agreement between the Government of Spain and the United Nations, MDG-F aims to accelerate progress on the Millennium Development Goals. With a total contribution of approximately \$900 million, MDG-F has since financed 130 MDG-linked joint programmes in 50 countries around the world, along with 9 thematic knowledge-management Initiatives. MDG-F works through eight thematic windows<sup>8</sup> to support national governments, local authorities and civil-society organizations in their efforts to tackle poverty and inequality.

Through its Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Window, MDG-F has allocated \$90 million to 13 targeted programmes. MDG-F has also encouraged programmes funded through other windows to mainstream a gender perspective into all aspects of programming and provided related guidance. Reflecting a core commitment to gender equality, both as a standalone goal and as a prerequisite to achieving all MDGs, the Fund builds on the belief that gender mainstreaming and targeted interventions are complementary and reinforcing, and that this two-pronged approach emanates from the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Under the dual strategy, MDG-F provided terms of reference, developed together with partner UN agencies, to each of the thematic windows as an element of quality assurance:

- **MDG-F Gender Window terms of reference** were simultaneously wide-ranging—to allow for tailoring to national realities—and very specific. Guidance emphasized priority programming areas and recommended strategies, such as multisectoral interventions and working concurrently at the 'upstream' policy and legislation level and at 'downstream' levels to build capacity and engage national and subnational stakeholders. Gender Window guidance also stressed the need to improve enabling environments for gender mainstreaming, and to work with development partners to reinforce aid effectiveness principles.<sup>9</sup> At a finer level, the terms of reference encouraged Gender Window programme teams to ensure women are empowered with improved capabilities in the areas of education, health and nutrition.
- **Terms of reference for each of the other seven thematic windows** included directives that varied by window. In some cases, such as that of the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Window, there was more specific direction—building on UN Security Council resolutions linked to gender equality.<sup>10</sup> For other windows—particularly for Environment and Climate Change—the analysis noted that the terms of reference lacked clear gender analysis and related guidance.

MDG-F also developed '**Guidance for the Development of Gender-Responsive Joint Programmes**,<sup>11</sup> which stressed four elements of planning and directed programmes to: i) ensure that each programme's situational analysis identified the underlying issues related to gender power relations, and that each programme addressed these in the context of national priorities; ii) build on past experiences to maximize progress and use existing capacity for gender in an efficient manner; iii) create management and coordination arrangements among joint programme partners that recognize existing gender-related agencies/experts and relevant inter-agency working groups, and identify how the joint programmes can work and coordinate with them; and iv) design joint-programme results frameworks to clearly articulate gender issues and include indicators and processes that will allow for adequate resourcing for gender equality and transparent monitoring and evaluation.

The MDG-F commitment to gender equality and the implementation of a dual strategy is showing immediate, though varied, added value at the national level. Findings of this analysis point to increased public awareness on the importance of gender equality as a component of aid and development effectiveness, and to improvements in institutional structures and resource allocations for gender equality. Such progress supports and entrenches international and national commitments to human rights as articulated in CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action.

MDG-F joint programmes have added value to both the global development process and national-level development efforts by generating evidence that illustrates the complexity of gender as a social organizing principle. MDG-F joint programmes have built on past experience and national commitments to identify and test strategies that can be tailored to national needs and different socio-cultural, economic and geographic realities. Perhaps most importantly, these programmes have shown that collaboration between UN agencies and national partners has the potential to promote the human rights of women and create momentum for transformation of discriminatory power relations between men and women.



*In Tunisia, where this young woman greets passerby at her carpet-weaving stand at an artisan festival, MDG-F is helping create jobs in areas that attract migrant youth.*

# 1 GENDER-TARGETED JOINT PROGRAMMES

The MDG-F Gender Window portfolio analysis reviewed 13 joint programmes funded to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The analysis was conducted through a review of planning documents, monitoring and workshop reports, programme websites and in-depth evaluation reports.<sup>12</sup> The analysis also drew on the experience, activities and expertise of the MDG-F Knowledge Management Initiative for the Gender Window and indirectly on feedback from programme coordinators.

## 1.1 Overview of Gender Window interventions

Gender inequality is entrenched in social, institutional, economic and cultural systems. Addressing it effectively and transforming unequal power relations between men and women **requires multisectoral approaches and in-depth analysis of issues in their national and subnational contexts.**

MDG-F Gender Window programmes operated across multiple sectors with multiple partners and addressed the complexities of gender inequality in their specific country contexts. The variety and scope of programmes highlighted the potential for adaptation to different settings (including conflict and post-conflict contexts) and national priorities.

In many cases, programmes used a combination of strategies to address the complexities of inequality. For example, a number of programmes worked with partners to develop legislation that addresses gender-based violence, supported survivors of violence to access productive (agricultural and business-related) resources and concurrently conducted additional activities with media and non-governmental organizations to build awareness of women's human rights at the community level.

Such a multisectoral approach included increasing awareness among **sectoral ministries** about how gender issues are relevant to development effectiveness in each sector and how gender-responsive planning and programming can be accomplished in

a coordinated way. Programmes also engaged **central ministries**, such as those responsible for finance and planning, in gender analysis of development and aid effectiveness that improves the prospects for sustainability in management of future donor contributions and in allocation of national budgets. Further, by engaging **national statistics offices**, programmes endeavoured to help local officials understand and create improved data frameworks (with sex-disaggregated data at finer levels of detail) that could then be fed back to support sectoral ministries to improve the quality of their policy, planning and implementation. **UNCT Gender Theme Groups** were instrumental in facilitating the multisectoral approach of joint programmes through advocacy within their own agencies, and—in many cases—through team building with national development partners, including the media and other donors.

Another aspect of MDG-F Gender Window joint programmes was the aim to design and implement approaches that would **facilitate gender-responsive development while addressing inequalities and discriminatory practices** across multiple sectors. In doing so, programmes added value to national-level MDG achievement efforts by ensuring the inclusion of women, particularly the most vulnerable, as not only the beneficiaries of the development process, but also as key agents of change.

MDG-F programmes also demonstrated the potential of targeted gender-equality interventions to **support governments in their role as the primary national duty bearers** responsible for upholding women's

### BOX1.1 STRATEGIES USED BY THE GENDER THEMATIC WINDOW PROGRAMMES

1. Eliminating social, institutional and structural discrimination that underpins and perpetuates Gender-based Violence;
2. Improving women's access to economic and political (decision-making) resources;
3. Strengthening legislative and policy frameworks to support gender equality;
4. Improving enabling environments for gender equality in government—such as capacity development, gender responsive social services and financing for gender; and
5. Generating increased demand for gender equality from communities and women themselves.



*Colombian indigenous leaders discuss community plan to combat environmental degradation, reduce climate change-related risks and implement adaptation measures.*

human rights. Approximately 75 percent of joint programmes incorporated efforts to improve legislative and policy frameworks at the national level, and remaining programmes included regional and local-level policy elements. Many programmes used awareness-raising and capacity-development modalities to support government staff in improved implementation of laws and policies. This emphasis demonstrated programme partners' understanding that achieving gender equality is a government responsibility that requires national ownership and continuous monitoring to assess sustainability.

As a supplement to capacity development with government officials, programmes worked to raise awareness and analytical skills at community levels to **create demand for women's empowerment initiatives**, support women in articulating and exercising their rights, and positively influence men and boys' views of gender-equality concerns. Through some programmes, local governments were more closely linked with communities to mobilize community groups, create inclusive and safe spaces for dialogue on women's empowerment, and bring forward the issue of civil-society responsibility for women's security, health, literacy and economic activity. In some cases, community mobilization initiatives also raised awareness of the constructive role that men and boys can play in redefining gender roles at the household and community levels.

## BOX 1.2 ADDRESSING INTERSECTING INEQUALITIES THROUGH DIFFERENT TARGETED APPROACHES

In Colombia, Bolivia and Guatemala, the programmes recognized that poverty and Gender-based Violence are higher in geographic regions with concentrations of indigenous peoples and that targeting these areas can provide specific benefits and support more equitable development.

In Brazil, the attempt to combine racial and gender equality addressed civil rights issues that inhibit Afro-descendent and indigenous women's development potential.

In Namibia, the joint programme stressed that programme success is dependent on analysis of age, race and rural/urban breakdowns and that women in these different groups may experience different levels of benefit depending on their specific realities, concluding that blanket approaches may not work to reduce vulnerabilities for all groups.

In Ethiopia and Viet Nam, the programmes showed it is critical to analyse vulnerabilities as they relate to social groupings, to avoid the risk of missing groups that are even more vulnerable than the ones targeted. This was the case of women in Ethiopia who, in spite of not being heads of household, are even poorer, and also have HIV-positive status or a physical disability. Additionally, in Viet Nam, women such as domestic workers fall outside national social protection schemes.

## BOX 1.3 TRANSFORMATIONAL POTENTIAL OF ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS

Approximately half of the 13 MDG-F Gender Window joint programmes attempted to engage men and boys to different degrees, providing the opportunity to use these examples to understand challenges and foster this approach to transformational change.

The underlying theory is that without men's solid commitment to a change in gender relations—be that women's empowerment and control of economic resources or political and household-level participation in decision-making—neither targeted nor mainstreaming gender programmes can be sustainable.

MDG-F programmes' situation analyses had clear statements of root causes of discrimination, and planning documents indicated the engagement of opinion leaders, decision makers, community men and boys, community groups (including faith-based groups) and other gatekeepers of social norms and values that discriminate against women. However, even in cases where men were identified as direct beneficiaries in programme planning documents, their participation during implementation has been noted as potentially problematic.

### 1.2 Challenges

Joint gender programme quality was affected not only by the practical aspects of operations, the functioning of programme teams and the success of activities, but also by the more conceptual or **'big picture' issues**, such as attempts to achieve **transformational change** for women and girls or expectations regarding the **synergies produced by collaboration across sectors**. Analysis of programme success in such areas is difficult in the short term, but initial findings demonstrate different levels of achievement in merging conceptual development issues into the practicalities of planning, logic frameworks and monitoring.

**Practical challenges** faced by MDG-F programmes were linked to planning and, in particular, to the implementation and monitoring. Such challenges included:

- **Inadequate investment of time and expertise at the planning stage.** Insufficient attention to planning was repeatedly identified in evaluation documents as negatively impacting the quality of programme design. The efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation were correlated to the investment of time and resources during the planning and start-up stages, highlighting the critical need of addressing this challenge to improve future programming.
- **Inconsistent understanding and implementation of results-based management and logical frameworks.** MDG-F programmes reflected different interpretations of results-based planning, indicating the need to raise expertise among programme staff. Approximately one third of the programmes obviously struggled with logic-framework terminology at the planning stage, confusing planning levels and using terms inconsistently. Evaluators widely agreed that programmes had demonstrated considerable success at the activity level; however, they were also near-universally critical of the quality of logic-framework indicators, which in many cases had not linked to or demonstrated progress toward the stated programme outputs and outcomes.
- **High level of management complexity.** On average, an MDG-F joint programme had six UN-system and seven government partners, indicating a very high level of management complexity that hindered even the routine tasks of arranging meetings, encouraging consistent representation of programme partners, reviewing information and making decisions. Higher-level management arrangements—the division of responsibility and harmonization among different partners—were similarly challenging. This level of complexity increased further in the context of joint gender programmes, because they also neces-

sitated building capacity and raising awareness of gender issues and human rights among partners, in order to ensure that decision-making was as informed and progressive as possible.

- **Inability to engage and retain technically qualified local staff.** Staffing became problematic in a number of countries. Finding, hiring and retaining technically qualified staff was difficult for many programmes and hindered the start-up phase, implementation of activities and development of partnerships with different stakeholder groups. Causes for staff turnover varied, but often staff faced challenges in reporting to multiple UN and government agencies with many layers of bureaucracy and different protocols.

All MDG-F Gender Window programmes attempted to learn from such challenges. Mid-term programme evaluations recommended adaptations, and how— or whether or not—those recommendations were implemented affected overall success. In some cases, programmes made innovative course corrections and achieved planned and unanticipated positive results. Other programmes fell behind schedule and were unable to fully implement plans.

### 1.3 Lessons learned

MDG-F Gender Window programmes offer a number of clear lessons, and the mid-term and final evaluation documents provide additional insight into the critical importance of gender-responsive planning and inclusive management arrangements for aid and development effectiveness. This publication's aim is not to present an exhaustive list of lessons learned, but rather to summarize the key findings applicable to all MDG-F gender-targeted programmes. Such findings complement those of the parallel gender-mainstreaming analysis discussed in the following chapter and can be used to guide the next steps in joint gender programming.

**Clear visioning and articulation of issues are critical to programme success.** Programme partners' agreement on priority issues, based on an understanding of gender power relations in each country, enhances government ownership, alignment and harmonization. Vision clarification requires ensuring



*A deli built with MDG-F support provides livelihoods to several families that previously lived in extreme poverty in Bañado Sur, a neighborhood in the capital of Paraguay.*

that partners—such as UN agencies, government ministries and civil-society organizations—understand how gender inequalities constrain the achievement of partners' own development mandates and potential contributions (as individuals and institutions) and how increased gender equality will improve development effectiveness in their sectors.

**Balancing short- and long-term development objectives is necessary to ensure ongoing commitment and buy-in.** Tangible results desired in the short term (e.g., developing pilots, providing services to specific groups or mobilizing communities) must be pursued alongside higher-level strategic changes in legislation or social norms and the ongoing facilitating effort to strengthen the enabling environment—including awareness building and capacity development among key stakeholders and decision makers.

MDG-F joint programmes that combined these approaches demonstrated a mix of similarly parallel results. In some instances, programmes were able to use a community's achievements to demonstrate the potential of policy change.



A Moroccan woman examines an MDG-F programme poster on entrepreneurial opportunities for women.

**Absorption capacity must be accurately assessed to support effective implementation.** Effectiveness depends on both how well national stakeholders are able to use financial resources and, more importantly, how well they can embrace new directions and changes introduced by gender programmes. This local absorption capacity is often complicated by the fact that gender norms are personalized differently by different groups and are deeply rooted in institutional, cultural and religious systems. Entrenched values and institutional norms that discriminate against women can make organizational cultures very resistant to gender-equality programmes. In the absence of awareness and buy-in developed during a programme’s lifetime (through strong communication strategies that provide positive reinforcement to communities and political leaders that support gender equality), there is a great risk that the gains realized may evaporate within a few years of the programme’s end—particularly if ministries responsible for gender equality are marginalized from central government decision-making.

MDG-F Gender Window programmes that did not assess absorption capacity were overambitious, with thinly spread resources and initiatives that failed to build necessary capacity and support; a number of mid-term evaluations identified the need to scale back and focus on fewer areas. In contrast,

programmes with strong sustainability potential were more focused and made higher investments in building government ownership, engaging central and line ministries, supporting civil society to monitor progress and advocate for gender equality, and raising awareness within the private sector—particularly among members of the media.

**Engaging an inclusive and relevant group of government and civil-society stakeholders is critical to sustainability and ownership.** Ensuring that programme objectives for gender equality are integrated into national, subnational and community institutions requires careful stakeholder analysis and targeted initiatives that make programmes meaningful for specific stakeholder groups.

MDG-F programmes whose local-level pilots considered men and boys as stakeholders—including male politicians and government officials, community and religious leaders, and family members—took an important step toward transformation that can be sustained by continuing to highlight achieving gender equality involves and benefits both men and women. In programmes that made men aware of scope and objectives of local initiatives, men were less threatened by women’s new activities and more likely to see community-encompassing benefits—such as in the introduction of microfinance initiatives or literacy training. Including men and boys in programmes also reduced the risk of backlash against women participants.

**Accountability and buy-in from national governments and UN decision makers can make or break programmes.** Senior decision makers are key stakeholders who must be aware of and engaged in programme planning and processes. Programmes with strong senior-level involvement from both the national government and its UN-agency partners demonstrate the flexibility and strength necessary to mitigate risks, adjust strategy as needed and optimize achievements for diverse groups of beneficiaries.

While participation in National Steering Committees and management groups was an important element of MDG-F gender-targeted programmes, there was a clear need for additional informal avenues to engage senior decision makers who can exercise their influence in support of a gender-responsive organi-

zational culture and the broader concept of gender equality. Programmes that linked interventions to normative agreements such as CEDAW, constitutional and legislative commitments for gender equality or national action plans could more clearly articulate and rationalize initiatives to senior decision makers, making it easier for those individuals to provide strategic and timely support.

**Technically sound programmes are more successful and have better implementation and continuity.**

Programmes that invest in the start-up phase and take the time to create technically sound teams demonstrate clearer achievements and stronger national involvement. Key technical elements that contribute to success include the use of consistent terminology to define results logic, coherent logic frameworks and the development or use of existing relevant indicators to monitor progress and results.

While the need for technical soundness applies to all programming, there is a particular need in the context of gender initiatives. Gender Window programmes with coherent logic chains and clear indicators are overcoming institutional biases against 'gender and development' approaches and building a credible base of relevant evidence. Improved evidence can then be used to demonstrate how gender equality is a key contributing factor in development effectiveness.

## 1.4 Added value of gender-targeted joint programmes

MDG-F Gender Window documentation demonstrates that joint programmes can increase the gender-responsiveness of country programmes in a number of ways—by concentrating funding and technical assistance, by fostering innovation in development approaches to produce evidence, and by demonstrating the benefits of gender equality. This can, in

### BOX 1.4 MDG-F GENDER-TARGETED JOINT PROGRAMMES BREAK NEW GROUND AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The 13 MDG-F Gender Window programmes—individually and to varying degrees—have conceptualized, developed, spearheaded, supported, facilitated, participated or otherwise engaged in some important 'firsts' for countries in all parts of the world. The most critical contributions were in the policy, advocacy, research and service-provision spheres, with particularly notable achievements in the area of gender-based violence.

#### FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES, PLANS AND LAWS TO COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- First-ever national strategy to combat gender-based violence: **Occupied Palestinian territory**
- First-ever national action plan for preventing domestic or gender-based violence: **Guatemala, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam**
- First-ever law against domestic violence: **Timor-Leste**
- First-ever rollout plan of action for coordinated implementation of existing gender-based violence laws and policies: **Namibia**

#### BROAD-BASED CIVIL-SOCIETY AND MEDIA ADVOCACY

- First-ever large-scale (regional and local) advocacy campaign targeting men and boys: **Colombia**
- First-ever advocacy campaign concurrently combating gender-based, racial and ethnic discrimination: **Brazil**

#### RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION, MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

- First-ever dataset and national study on domestic violence against women: **Guatemala, Viet Nam**
- First-ever attempts at harmonizing gender-based violence data derived from different sources into national systems with common indicators: **Bangladesh, Brazil, Namibia, Viet Nam**
- First-ever centralized gender-equality monitoring system and database of women in decision-making bodies: **Occupied Palestinian territory**

#### PROVISION OF VICTIM SERVICES

- First-ever shelter for victims of domestic violence: **Gaza, Occupied Palestinian territory**
- First-ever tools to enable women to report incidents of gender-based violence: **Bangladesh** (mobile phones); **Namibia** (free reporting hotlines)

turn, lead to changes in behaviour, attitudes and social norms that will help transform gender relations.

Specifically, this analysis reveals that gender-targeted joint programmes add value in ways that include:

- **Creating efficiencies by concentrating technical capacity and financial investment.** Despite the challenge of complex management arrangements, the majority of joint programmes improve operational efficiency by establishing a programme hub to provide outreach across two or more sectors. Having a hub of information and technical assistance also builds a consistent understanding of gender analysis among stakeholders and supports future collaboration. Joint gender programmes have also added value by learning lessons from previous initiatives, building on the combined experience of multiple agencies, enhancing the depth and reach of prior achievements, and supporting continuity and sustainability of the progress previously made on gender equality.
- **Increasing awareness, capacity and effectiveness for gender-responsive development.** A significant way in which MDG-F gender programmes have added value to UNCT work is by raising the profile of gender equality as an interdisciplinary development issue. Programmes are demonstrating that high prominence of gender equality as an issue creates a ‘critical mass’ effect—of more people raising gender-inequality concerns as part of development discourse—and boosts ‘staying power’ of the issue of gender equality in the policy context.
- **Generating demand for human rights and strengthening legislative frameworks.** MDG-F programmes are demonstrating they can add value by catalysing awareness and influence across sectors with multiple development actors by supporting women in exercising their civil rights, the right to health or the right to live free of violence. Together, such advocacy work creates both the understanding of and the demand for human rights and gender equality. Demand generation as a strategy supports strong civil societies, fosters open communications about power dynamics and equality, and improves governance by creating a feedback loop where citizens drive policy change in support of human rights.
- **Meeting women’s practical needs while promoting strategic interests.** MDG-F work has shown the significant potential of gender-targeted programmes to address women’s immediate practical needs for education, security and health while concurrently supporting strategic transformational change. Strategic change promotes women and girls as capable, respected and informed actors in the development process (from their own families to their communities and countries), transforming social and cultural norms over the medium to long term. Strategic change improves women’s status within households and reduces structural discrimination against women and girls in political and economic spheres.
- **Innovating and providing the basis for replication.** Gender-targeted MDG-F programmes were catalysed by the participation, knowledge and interest of a wide range of stakeholders, the political profile of the programmes, and the availability of adequate financial resources. The MDG-F scale of programme investment—ranging from \$3.6 million to \$9 million—allowed them to rigorously examine issues of gender inequality on national and subnational levels and to develop innovative interventions that can now serve as the basis for replication in national planning and programme delivery as well as donor-funded initiatives. MDG-F also facilitated information exchange and South-South cooperation for immediate benefits and replication, and a number of joint-programme exchanges supported national partners’ capacity development and the creation of international networks of gender-equality advocates.

This level of investment in gender equality is unprecedented.<sup>13</sup> It is clear that the surge of funds and related technical assistance have facilitated a critical mass of awareness, understanding and technical competence to promote the women’s human rights and improved development processes. Funding availability has also allowed programmes to break new ground on a country-by-country basis, resulting in several ‘firsts’ achieved by joint programmes focused on gender-based violence (see Box 1.4).



*A young owner of a Haitian beauty salon received business skills training and additional business support after winning a contest for women entrepreneurs. (Photo: Andres Martinez Casares)*

## 2 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN MDG-F THEMATIC WINDOWS

Conducted by UN Women, the analysis of gender mainstreaming in 130 programmes administered through the eight MDG-F thematic windows assessed the degree of mainstreaming gender into programme planning. This analysis is the most extensive review of gender-related UNCT programming activities to date, providing information on gender analysis, results frameworks, activities, beneficiaries and use of technical expertise in programme management.



*In Cambodia, MDG-F supports indigenous and Khmer artisans of four provinces by providing entrepreneurial skills such as marketing, quality control, and costing through a joint programme benefitting the creative industries.*

## 2.1 Overview of gender mainstreaming in programme planning

Because of its extremely large scope, the analysis used a strategic approach to knowledge management to identify high-level comparative information. In tracking the extent to which gender equality was reflected in programme planning and implementation, the analysis **relied on a matrix composed of 60 indicators and investigation categories**, developed based on UNDG-endorsed UNCT Performance Indicators for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment<sup>14</sup> and subsequently applied to reviewed programme documents to provide scores for programmes. The highest score possible was 21; MDG-F joint programmes averaged 10.8 on this scale (see Figure 2.1).

By distinguishing programmes in the Gender Window from all MDG-F programmes, the analysis sought to identify differences between targeted and integrated gender–mainstreaming approaches—and was able to demonstrate uniformly high scores in targeted programming delivered through the Gender Window and variable scores among the other seven thematic areas of work. It must, however, be noted that average

**FIGURE 2.1 MDG-F THEMATIC WINDOW SCORES BASED ON GENDER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS\***



\*Note: Indicators forming the basis of the scale for this analysis were developed based on ‘UNCT Performance Indicators for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment’ (UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality, 2008).

scores by window only provide a partial picture, since there were many cases of significant variation in the scores among programmes within each window; for example, a number of programmes outside of the Gender Window scored as high as 19.

The analysis also **examined the terms of reference** for the seven MDG-F windows (excluding the Gender Window) and **used the MDG-F ‘Guidance for the Development of Gender Responsive Joint Programmes’**, based on UNDG guidance for gender-responsive joint programmes, as a framework for assessing programme documents. Voluntary questionnaire responses from self-selecting programmes across funding windows supplemented document analysis, highlighted initial learning from the experience of gender mainstreaming and pointed to areas where gender mainstreaming is adding value to MDG-F joint programming.

While MDG-F explicitly mandated including a gender perspective in funded programming, the terms of reference that guided each window’s selection of programmes among multiple proposals varied significantly in the degree of gender inclusion. Many lacked explicit requirements or incentives to address gender equality as a part of programme design, while others received concrete guidance that, in turn, corresponded to higher overall gender performance scores.

For example, the terms of reference for the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Window built on UN Security Council resolutions linked to gender equality and included the most specific gender-mainstreaming requirements of all MDG-F thematic windows. Guidance identified gender discrimination as a key factor leading to conflict and regarded women’s empowerment as one of the crucial challenges and opportunities of this thematic area. The terms of reference also contained a number of illustrative examples of including gender equality and women’s empowerment criteria in programme planning. Such explicit guidance was reflected in the high level of inclusion of gender concerns in this window’s joint programmes—and in the window’s overall gender performance score, second only to the targeted MDG-F Gender Window. The Conflict Preven-

## BOX 2.1 CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACE-BUILDING: GUINEA-BISSAU

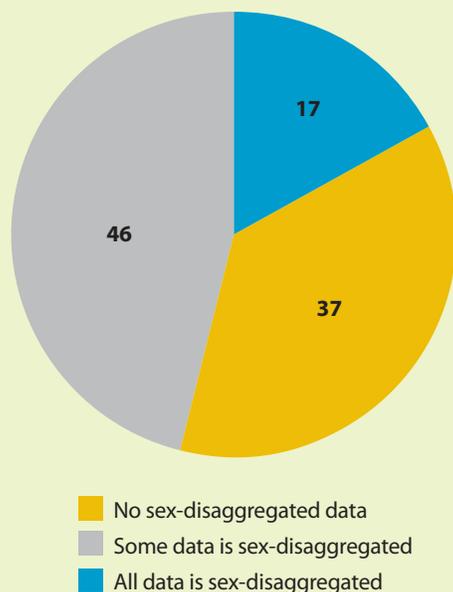
The joint MDG-F Guinea-Bissau programme, which scored 17 out of 21 on this analysis’ gender performance indicator scale, demonstrated that thorough programme planning informed with a gender perspective can contribute to tangible advances in gender equality. In Guinea-Bissau, this translated to planned support to the development of a stronger legal framework to combat violence against women and improve their access to justice. Such support culminated in the two new laws: the Law against Female Genital Mutilation and the Law against Domestic Violence. In addition, the programme supported a community-based awareness-raising campaign on women’s human rights and a national study titled ‘A Portrait of Violence against Women in Guinea-Bissau,’ which will contribute to the forthcoming national action plan aiming to combat sexual and gender-based violence.

tion and Peacebuilding Window was also the only MDG-F window to require a minimum of a 15 percent programme-budget allocation to gender issues, though programmes expressed difficulty in tracking such commitments beyond the initial planning stage.

The terms of reference for the Youth, Employment and Migration window acknowledged the more vulnerable situation of women migrant workers. Documentation for both this window and that on Children, Food Security and Nutrition noted that enhanced participation of women was a central factor for success: “An integrated approach to ending child under-nutrition will in itself result in increased attention and priority to gender issues and increased empowerment and capacity of women (in particular poor women).” Illustrated interventions included promoting spousal sharing of parental responsibilities such as infant care and feeding.

Remaining windows received minimal instructions or requirements related to gender mainstreaming; women were briefly mentioned among the disad-

**FIGURE 2.2 MDG-F JOINT PROGRAMMES OUTSIDE THE GENDER WINDOW USING SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA IN PROGRAMME PLANNING (%)**



vantaged and vulnerable groups to be targeted. The Environment and Climate Change window in particular faced certain unique challenges related to the nature of the subject matter and the relatively new policy and academic focus on the intersections between gender and climate change. Still, a number of programmes were able to demonstrate some progress on gender equality in the context of promoting environmental sustainability.

MDG-F encouraged programmes to base their design on thorough **situational analysis**, including sex-disaggregated data reflecting men and women’s positions in society and an understanding of progress made by previous gender initiatives in each MDG-F thematic area.

Across all windows, more than half of the programmes identified MDG-3 (Promote gender equality and empower women) as a priority, yet only 24 percent of programmes outside the Gender Window referred to other national or international agreements or

**BOX 2.2 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE: ECUADOR**

Under the MDG-F Environment and Climate Change Window, gender-equality issues were integrated into initial programme design, which included a thorough situational analysis and identified specific results. The programme supported the establishment of a leadership school for women, the allocation of scholarships to indigenous women and the institutionalization of women’s committees in local governments. Programme managers credit such successes partly to strong inter-agency partnerships and the inter-cultural approach to working with local communities to assess gender-equality needs.

commitments to gender equality (e.g., national laws and policies or CEDAW). More than one third (39 percent) of MDG-F programmes provided excellent examples of a rigorous analysis of the gender-equality situation, and more than half included some of type of sex-disaggregated data (see Figure 2.2). Most frequently, such data quantified female-headed households, literacy, maternal mortality, anaemia prevalence in pregnant women, women’s participation in agriculture or other economic sectors, and incidence of gender-based violence.

Gender-mainstreaming strategies integrated into each programme were expected to use such information to determine overall programme goals and identify objectives and interventions to promote gender equality. Such objectives were to be included in the **results logic to enable a chain of gender-responsive outcomes, outputs, activities and relevant monitoring indicators** to be used to report on progress and demonstrate results.

Yet many programmes, even those identified as having conducted in-depth evidence-based analyses of gender inequalities, were not always able to translate such information into measurable results frameworks. Only 40 percent of programmes outside the Gender Window included references to gender equality in outcome statements. The output level proved more

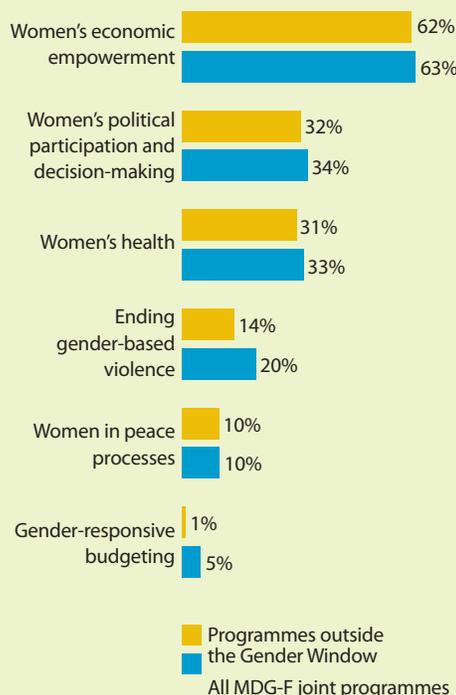
**FIGURE 2.3 GENDER-RELATED ACTIVITY THEMES AMONG MDG-F THEMATIC PROGRAMMES**



permeable to gender mainstreaming, with nearly two thirds of all programmes committed to delivering new products and services that contributed to women's empowerment, gender equality or both. However, it was at the level of activities where most programmes deployed their gender strategies in a more visible way.

In terms of indicators, 69 percent of programmes outside the Gender Window utilized gender-sensitive indicators at the output level but only 24 percent included these to track results at the outcome level, which carries the risk that the final impact of the programme on gender equality remain unmeasured and unknown.

**FIGURE 2.4 PERCENTAGE OF ALL JOINT PROGRAMMES PER THEME**



Examining **thematic areas** highlighted differences in the extent to which programme planning contained a focus on gender-equality issues. Programmes that addressed gender-responsive budgeting and violence against women scored highest in planning for gender-equality results. The largest overall number—82 programmes—planned to address women's economic security and rights; yet the average score for these programmes was only slightly higher than the total average score of all programmes (10.88 vs. 10.80). In many cases, low scores resulted from the fact that programmes' most common—and often the only—gender-mainstreaming strategy was limited to naming women as programme beneficiaries, most often of income-generating activities, while neither simultaneously identifying nor addressing relevant structural inequalities. Such cases demonstrated the need to go beyond numbers of beneficiaries as the sole element of a gender-mainstreaming approach.

## BOX 2.3 FOOD SECURITY AND CHILD NUTRITION: VIET NAM

During the initial planning stages, thorough situational analysis indicated that the most strategic entry point for improving child nutrition lay in strengthening the legal framework on maternity leave. In December 2011, with support from the joint programme, paid six-month maternity leave was approved by the National Assembly Committee on Social Affairs, and related provisions were amended to the existing labour code, following extensive advocacy at national and subnational levels. This resulted in improved infant and young child feeding practices, including increased compliance with the United Nations Children's Fund/World Health Organization guidelines on breastfeeding exclusively during the first six months and safe complementary feeding for children 6–24 months old.

## 2.2 Challenges and lessons learned

Analysis of gender mainstreaming in MDG-F programmes revealed a number of challenges in the implementation of this component of the dual gender-equality strategy. In response to such challenges, many programmes reported course corrections taken to improve performance after the planning stage and offered related lessons that strengthened results delivery and the practice of gender mainstreaming. For example, many programmes that had not initially included gender-related analysis or results took corrective measures, often as a result of mid-term evaluation recommendations. Once identified, this knowledge directed the programme toward more effective strategies, with the most common first step of seeking out partnerships with relevant UN or civil society organizations for technical assistance.

### LIMITED USE OF DATA

A large number of programmes relied on perceptions and qualitative information rather than empirical evidence in their situational analysis, with

37 percent not including any sex-disaggregated data, with reasons varying from poor planning to lack of available data.

In cases where statistics did not specifically focus on people, it proved difficult to take a sex-disaggregated approach. For example, a number of Environment Window programmes provided data on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or loss of biodiversity but not on the members of affected communities or potential agents of change, largely accounting for the low average gender performance ratings among environment programmes during this analysis. Some programmes also missed the 'people dimension' by focusing on households as a single unit of measure.

Other programmes overlooked the potential of existing sex-disaggregated data—such as that on life expectancy, literacy, indigenous populations and unemployment—and presented information in aggregate form, diminishing the potential to assess gender-differentiated impacts of programme activities and outputs over time.

In some cases, the barrier to relevant data inclusion was simply that it did not exist. Access to data remains a serious concern among gender-equality practitioners. A number of programmes identified such gaps early in the planning process and used them as a 'push' factor to strengthen national capacities for collecting baseline information.

### DIFFICULTIES IN LINKING GENDER ANALYSIS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE RESULTS LOGIC

Linking gender analysis and gender equality in the results logic was a challenge when empirical evidence was lacking—and also when it was not. Effective use of results-based management was identified as a common problem, regardless of programmes' thematic or cross-cutting emphasis on gender. In the case of gender-targeted programming, the process of developing a results logic required a sound understanding of and commitment to gender-equality processes, as well as careful planning during the start-up phase. To be successful, this process required extensive collaboration—of gender experts and monitoring and evaluation specialists. The majority of MDG-F programmes outside the Gender Window had

## BOX 2.4 PRIVATE-SECTOR DEVELOPMENT: EGYPT

The Egypt programme targeting private-sector development had originally proposed to work with female landowners. However, subsequent research revealed that when women landowners in Upper Egypt get married, land traditionally passes on to their husbands and results in a loss of control over these resources. Research also revealed that women were expected to stop working when they married, and that their salaries remained traditionally inferior to those of men.

The programme, therefore, changed its focus from women landowners to women workers and the related challenge of harmful traditional norms in the workplace. With this new approach, the original programme design no longer offered appropriate indicators to measure gender-equality progress, and the joint programme coordinator regarded the subsequent revision of the results framework as a crucial factor for success. UN Women-developed gender-mainstreaming training for all programme staff and the expertise provided by a gender specialist working within the Programme Management Unit were also regarded as essential to achieving gender-equality results, which included increased voice for women workers in workplace decision-making.

difficulty building gender-equality results into logic chains, and there were particular difficulties identifying relevant gender-responsive indicators.

### UNEVEN INVOLVEMENT OF TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

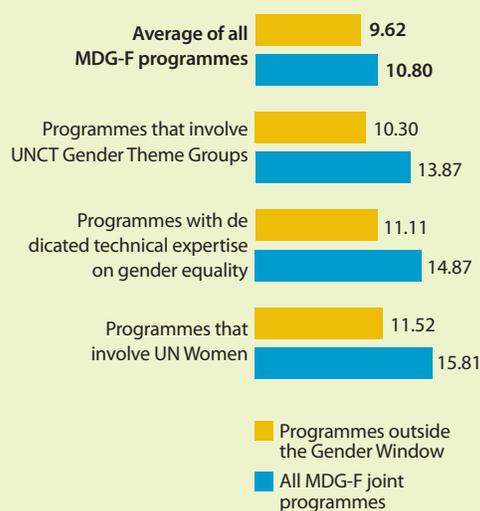
MDG-F programmes were strongly encouraged to engage with key stakeholders and specialists who could bring substantive knowledge and influence

enabling environments for gender equality. A minority of programmes reported having coordinated with experts, the most common arrangement being the development of a civil society partnership with gender-equality networks. The active participation of dedicated gender experts—such as those of UN Women or the UNCT Gender Theme Group—was positively correlated with stronger programme planning and management for the promotion of

*Women work at a Moroccan couscous cooperative supported by MDG-F.*



**FIGURE 2.5 MDG-F JOINT-PROGRAMME PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SCORES**



**BOX 2.5. CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING: BOLIVIA**

The Bolivia programme initially scored lowest in the MDG-F Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Window and subsequently sought technical advice from UN Women. As a result, the programme was able to contribute to strong results, the chief of which was the passing of a landmark law against violence and harassment of women political leaders. Involving strategic partners, raising awareness and conducting effective capacity-building on political violence against women—using a database that systematized information on cases of political violence—were instrumental to programme success.

gender equality. Further, this finding held true for non-gender windows, particularly when working with gender experts, which tended to result in more thorough situational analysis linked to meaningful results frameworks in the context of clearly articulated relevant national priorities.

Programme-management analysis demonstrated that programmes that involved experts have improved their planning. Programmes partnering with UN Women obtained a planning average score of 15.81, and programmes using dedicated technical gender-equality expertise averaged 14.87—compared to the 10.80 average of all joint programmes. The involvement of Gender Theme Groups made a similarly significant contribution to the integration of gender issues in the planning process, with an average programme score of 13.87. Not including the Gender Window, this positive correlation held true, especially in cases where programmes employed dedicated technical expertise on gender equality (11.11) or partnered with UN Women (11.52).

**LIMITED INFORMATION ON GENDER-MAINSTREAMING BUDGET ALLOCATION**

This analysis attempted to gather information on budget allocations for gender-equality results, and reported results but was able to find these mainly among targeted Gender Window programmes and some of the programmes under the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Window. Programme managers corroborated this finding. For example, even the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Window, the only window to require a minimum of a 15 percent programme-budget allocation to gender issues, expressed difficulty in tracking these commitments beyond the initial planning stage.

Tracking finances allocated to gender and linking expenditures to gender-specific achievements is currently being initiated by a number of UN agencies and development partners using an existing 'gender marker' system. In the near future, this will allow joint programmes to be more informed and transparent about how budgets are—or are not—used to promote gender equality.

### 2.3 MDG-F and gender mainstreaming: comparison with other experiences

Programmes supported by MDG-F have achieved many successes but also encountered many difficulties in pursuing gender mainstreaming, the adoption of which has been similarly challenging to many other organizations. For example, the UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality completed a review of 51 Common Country Assessments/United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks dated 2006–2009, using the same performance indicators as the present analysis—and with similar findings. As with MDG-F joint programmes, the gender responsiveness of programme plans varied considerably; about 10 percent of all identified strong gender-equality results. As with MDG-F, few UNCTs appeared to be seriously engaged with CEDAW either as a diagnostic or accountability tool, and gender-specific budgets were not evident in most.

The 2011 African Development Bank analysis, ‘Mainstreaming Gender Equality: A Road to Results or a

Road to Nowhere’ provides another relevant point of comparison.<sup>15</sup> The Bank’s Operations Evaluation Department examined 26 thematic gender evaluations and defined areas where action needs to be taken to promote gender equality. All such areas are relevant to and dovetail with the analysis of gender mainstreaming in MDG-F programmes. Specific commonalities include:

- **“First, an organisation’s leadership must consistently lead and support the mainstreaming of gender equality and policy. This must start at the top.”**<sup>16</sup> MGD-F leadership has sent a consistent message of the priority of gender-equality considerations and their critical nature to advancing the MDGs as a whole. Establishing the MDG-F Gender Window with high funding levels created an unprecedented opportunity for large-scale programmes, particularly those working on ending violence against women. MDG-F has been similarly explicit on the importance of gender mainstreaming throughout the rest of the thematic windows.

*Visually impaired adolescents, women and children learn income-generating creative and technical skills at an Itauguá, Paraguay centre for the blind, supported by MDG-F through the Oportunidades programme.*



- **“Second, systems of accountability and incentives must have enough ‘bite’ so staff cannot evade responsibility for delivering gender equality results.”** MDG-F recommended the inclusion of gender-equality considerations in all programme proposals, provided guidance on how to achieve this objective and created specific reporting lines to capture results. These measures represent strong incentives; however, the next step—of ensuring accountability for delivering on these requirements—was not fully taken.
- **“Third, gender equality work must be properly funded and there must be sufficient trained senior staff to gain traction over an organisation; a few junior gender staff is not enough.”** MDG-F provided significant funding to Gender Window programmes, but outside it, only the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Window actually required programmes to allocate a portion of their budgets to gender issues. Other windows left this as optional, consequently making it impossible to track gender-related spending. This analysis has also addressed human resources at the programming level, demonstrating that the inclusion of technical gender expertise positively correlates with improved programme planning and can lead to stronger results.
- **“Fourth, new procedures and practices must be well-designed, given a big push at the outset and the momentum maintained rather than allowed to diminish.”** MDG-F procedures and guidance were well-defined, but there was no accountability for maintaining momentum, nor were many programmes aware of the existence of the guidance—demonstrating the need for stronger communications and accountability mechanisms.
- **“Fifth, there needs to be a consistent approach to recording results and disseminating lessons.”** MDGF has made a considerable investment in evaluation and knowledge-management components of programmes; however, reporting on results for gender equality was not strong enough at the time of this analysis, despite the inclusion of specific reporting lines.
- **“Finally, the test of whether gender equality has been embedded in the mainstream of an organisation is the degree to which it is seen as contributing to rather than competing with the drive for more effective aid and other priorities. If gender equality is to become an integral part of the culture of an organisation [and] part of what defines its mission, values and objectives then consistent and sustained action is needed in all six of these areas.”** As a mechanism, MDG-F has aimed to support an organizational culture that would deliver gender-equality results through coordinated United Nations support in 50 countries. However, the MDG-F is only one player in a large and complex institutional system, where deep change is an evolutionary process. Consequently, this analysis has not been able to fully consider MDG-F impact on United Nations’ institutional for improving delivery on gender-equality results. However, strong gender-related guidance and, most importantly, the unprecedented funding for large-scale programming in support of gender equality, are commendable steps on the path toward such institutional change. The question remains as to what will happen once MDG-F programmes conclude and financial incentives disappear. The extent to which the MDG-F experience and lessons are considered in debates on institutional change will ultimately determine the MDG-F contribution of in this regard, and can only be assessed over time and through further analysis.



*In Sudan, a woman learning the art of henna practices on the trainer's hands.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations for funding mechanisms similar to the MDG-F

- **Support dedicated gender-equality programming.** Programmes under the MDG-F Gender Window boast the highest scores across the board on planning for gender-equality results, demonstrating that gender-targeted programmes delivered through the Gender Window are a critical part of an overall strategy to achieve gender-equality results.
- **Adopt standards for joint gender programmes as a UN system-wide commitment that builds on lessons learned and good practices to enhance consistency and quality of future programming.** To develop such standards, the lessons learned and good practices emerging from the two MDG-F analyses



*The La Familia Panadería, a bakery that employs nine men and women who helped build it in Paraguay's capital city of Asunción, was created with MDG-F funding as part of the Oportunidades programme. Oportunidades works to reduce poverty by providing training and employment opportunities to disadvantaged youth, including those with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.*

may be meshed with the findings of the future Evaluation of Joint Gender Programmes in the UN System<sup>17</sup> (led by UN Women) and triangulated with internationally recognized analytical frameworks for gender mainstreaming and empowerment. System-wide standards will improve programme comparability and align with accepted indicators. It will also be possible to improve the accuracy of monitoring and evaluating gender-equality progress resulting from joint programmes implemented over the medium to long term.

- **Strengthen accountability for gender-equality results.** MDG-F articulated strong provisions for the inclusion of gender-equality criteria into its programme-appraisal process and provided tools for integrating gender considerations into programme design and subsequent monitoring. However, these do not appear to have been matched by accountability mechanisms designed

to ensure that guidelines are implemented consistently across MDG-F windows and individual programmes.<sup>18</sup> Accountability could be strengthened by mechanisms such as applying the 'gender marker' approach to budget tracking,<sup>19</sup> withholding funding for non-compliance in reporting on gender-related results, or not approving programmes that do not integrate gender criteria. Programmes could also benefit from improved application of the UNCT performance indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment, as recommended in MDG-F programme-development guidance. This should be done at an early enough stage to enable in-progress course corrections—possibly in alignment with mid-term programme evaluations.

## Recommendations for gender-targeted joint programme design

- **Promote interdisciplinary and multisectoral approaches** to facilitate holistic responses to the complex social and cultural dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality. Coordinated and well-planned multisectoral approaches increase the potential for transformation of gendered power relations toward equality between men and women.
- **Balance strategic long-term change with short-term practical needs to improve development results for gender equality.** Gender-targeted MDG-F programmes have demonstrated significant potential to address women's immediate practical needs for education, security and health while concurrently supporting strategic transformational change.
- **Accurately assess absorption capacity to support effective implementation.** In the absence of awareness and buy-in developed during a programme's lifetime), the gains realized with additional funding and focus may evaporate within a few years of the programme's end. MDG-F Gender Window programmes that did not assess absorption capacity were overambitious, with thinly spread resources and initiatives that failed to build necessary capacity and support.

- **Engage an inclusive set of stakeholders at all programme levels to support sustainability and generate demand for ongoing attention to gender-equality issues and women’s human rights.** For instance, engaging men and boys as stakeholders is a key way to promote transformational change in gender relations.
- **Increase awareness of central ministries, such as those responsible for finance and planning.** National governments are key stakeholders for the implementation of successful multisectoral strategies for gender equality, as well as for future sustainability, management of donor contributions and budget allocation.
- **Involve and engage senior managers from both government and the UN system in programmes’ management arrangements.** Effectively engaging senior agency staff and government officials improves programmes’ ability to mitigate risks, make mid-course adaptations and entrench programme objectives at the national level.
- **Develop specific staffing plans and assign adequate funds for staffing purposes** to ensure that project managers and staff have appropriate levels of expertise, that national capacity can be built and that programmes can operate effectively without or despite staffing gaps.
- **Allocate funds to programme planning and start-up phases.** In the early stages of programme work, funding is needed to generate concrete contextual technical inputs—to develop a coherent theory of change and to coordinate objectives for gender equality within practical logic frameworks, using realistic progress-monitoring indicators for both the short and long terms.
- **Include relevant data and analysis linked to programme results.** Programme planning is stronger when it links cogent qualitative and quantitative analysis of key planning issues with clear programme outcomes, outputs and progress- and results-tracking indicators. Nearly one third of the programmes that conducted situational analyses did not support them with sufficient data and were, therefore, relying on perceptions and qualitative knowledge rather than empirical evidence to back programming decisions.
- **Include changes in gender equality in results at the outcome level.** Concrete and dependable gender-equality results are more likely to be achieved when planning documents include gender equality as at least one of the key outcome areas and provide indicators to measure progress. Additionally, sector- and issue-specific gender-equality results can be achieved when gender-equality outputs and indicators are clearly articulated within the respective outcome areas of the programme plan.
- **Ensure that activities and choices of beneficiaries link to measurable results as part of an overall results logic.** In many cases, programmes’ results logic failed to connect changes among targeted beneficiary groups to results at higher levels, or did not clearly define the underlying strategy for targeting women as beneficiaries—such as addressing structural factors that perpetuate inequalities. When not linked to specific strategies for empowerment, targeting women as beneficiaries does not necessarily add value and is not an effective gender-mainstreaming method.
- **Include technical gender-equality expertise in programme planning and management.** Engaging gender experts strongly correlates with gender-responsive programme design. Programmes may also wish to coordinate with UNCT Gender Theme Groups at the country level, which can not only offer technical assistance but could also enhance overall programme coordination.

## Recommendations for mainstreaming gender into joint programmes

- **Align to national priorities for advancing gender equality.** This can be accomplished by including references to relevant concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee, thereby improving situational analysis and ultimately, programme strategies.

- **Track resources for gender equality.** In general, few programmes specify the financial resources allocated to attaining gender-equality results; it was not possible to consistently gather such data. When this information is included, it indicates a transparent commitment and enables better resource management.
- **Strengthen reporting accountability.** Monitoring, annual reports and mid-term evaluations did not, at the time of writing, yield enough information on the achievement of planned results to form the basis of a meaningful analysis. Even where questions specifically related to gender equality were included in reporting forms, they went unanswered in the vast majority of cases.
- **Adjust programme plans and strategies based on deeper analysis.** Baseline studies and mid-term evaluations are important tools for making programme adjustments that can enhance gender-equality results, even when these were not planned at the outset of a programme. These analyses are also important for identifying potentially erroneous assumptions that might otherwise lead to wasted efforts or even harmful results.



*In the Philippines, where MDG-F works to provide young people with decent jobs as an alternative to migration, close to 1.5 million young people were unemployed in 2010. Half of them had a secondary education, and 40 percent had college degrees.*

## NOTES

- 1 This system-wide evaluation is currently in progress. Thus far, UN Women has released a preliminary study to support the scoping process of the final evaluation; see: UN Women, 2011, 'Analytical Overview of the UN Joint Gender Programmes Portfolio', Evaluation Office; available at <http://www.unwomen.org/publications/analytical-overview-of-the-un-joint-gender-programmes-portfolio/>.
- 2 The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and other agencies have been working with UN Women to introduce the 'gender marker' approach to financial tracking and harmonized reporting for gender. The gender marker has been identified as a good practice by the 2012 UN-SWAP on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 3 United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. 2002. 'Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview'. UN OSAGI, New York, p. vi.

- 4 Commission on the Status of Women. 1995. 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action' adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing.
- 5 UN Millennium Project. 2005. 'Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women.' Task Force on Education and Gender Equality.
- 6 UNDP. 'The Added Value of Joint Gender Programmes. Findings and recommendations to the wider community of UN agencies engaging in joint programming.' New York. (Forthcoming.)
- 7 UN Women. 'Analysis of Gender Mainstreaming in MDG-F Joint Programmes.' New York. (Forthcoming.)
- 8 MDG-F thematic windows include: Children, Food Security and Nutrition; Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding; Culture and Development; Democratic Economic Governance; Development and the Private Sector; Environment and Climate Change; Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; and Youth Employment and Migration.
- 9 The priorities of the MDG-F Gender Window are linked to the other seven MDGs and those identified in the UN Millennium Project 2005 'Taking Action' report prepared by the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. Aid effectiveness principles, as laid out in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action are: national ownership, mutual accountability, alignment, harmonization and managing for development results.
- 10 See UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960.
- 11 MDG-F. 2008. 'Guidance for the Development of Gender-Responsive Joint Programmes.' Available at [http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/all/themes/custom/undp\\_2/docs/MDGF-JP-Gender-Guidance.pdf](http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/all/themes/custom/undp_2/docs/MDGF-JP-Gender-Guidance.pdf).
- 12 In total, 12 programme documents, 13 biannual monitoring reports (2<sup>nd</sup> 2011), 13 mid-term evaluations and 6 final evaluations were reviewed. The analysis also included knowledge products developed by MDG-F programmes and its Knowledge Management Initiative for the Gender Window, implemented by UNDP. Further information on documents reviewed is available in the forthcoming UNDP portfolio analysis of the Gender Window; see UNDP, 'The Added Value of Joint Gender Programmes. Findings and recommendations to the wider community of UN agencies engaging in joint programming,' New York (Forthcoming).
- 13 In contrast, 2011 annual reports demonstrate that the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women provides countries with grants of under US\$ 1 million for two- to three-year programmes, and that the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme for Acceleration of the Abandonment of Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation provides countries with budgets of approximately \$100,000–\$760,000 annually.
- 14 United Nations Development Group. 2008. 'UNCT Performance Indicators for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment' and 'UNCT Performance Indicators for Gender Equality – Users' Guide'. UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality. August. Available at <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=222>.
- 15 African Development Bank Group. 2011. 'Mainstreaming Gender Equality: A Road to Results or a Road to Nowhere? An Evaluation Synthesis'. Operations Evaluation Department.
- 16 Ibid. (All quoted material in bullet list.)
- 17 This system-wide evaluation is currently in progress. Thus far, UN Women has released a preliminary study to support the scoping process of the final evaluation; see: UN Women, 2011, 'Analytical Overview of the UN Joint Gender Programmes Portfolio', Evaluation Office; available at <http://www.unwomen.org/publications/analytical-overview-of-the-un-joint-gender-programmes-portfolio/>.
- 18 See United Nations General Assembly, 65th session, 2010. 'Thematic Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the United Nations Secretariat, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services' (A/65/266), p. 8: "Since the late 1990s, evaluations of gender mainstreaming have been initiated by a number of organizations. Their findings have been consistent. All raised questions about the effectiveness and efficiency with which the strategy was being implemented. Inadequacies in analytical work, planning, reporting systems, mechanisms for accountability, resources and support structures were also identified."
- 19 The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and other agencies have been working with UN Women to introduce the 'gender marker' approach to financial tracking and harmonized reporting for gender. The gender marker has been identified as a good practice by the 2012 UN-SWAP on gender equality and women's empowerment.



### MDG Achievement Fund Secretariat

220 East 42nd Street, 20th floor, New York, NY 10017, USA  
[www.mdgfund.org](http://www.mdgfund.org)

### United Nations Development Programme

220 East 42nd Street, 21st floor, New York, NY 10017, USA  
[www.undp.org/gender](http://www.undp.org/gender)

### UN Women

220 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017, USA  
[www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)