



Australian Government
AusAID



Promoting Gender Equality through the Millennium Development Goals



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Cover: Woman in Nepal. Photo: AusAID



These icons symbolise the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – eight goals representing an agreement by world leaders to reduce poverty and enhance human development by 2015. More information about the MDGs is available online at www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/mdg.cfm

Contents

Introduction	1
Millennium Development Goal 1 Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger	2
Millennium Development Goal 2 Achieve Universal Primary Education	4
Millennium Development Goal 3 Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women	6
Millennium Development Goal 4 Reduce Child Mortality	8
Millennium Development Goal 5 Improve Maternal Health	10
Millennium Development Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases	12
Millennium Development Goal 7 Ensure Environmental Sustainability	14
Millennium Development Goal 8 Develop a Global Partnership for Development	16



Young women using a mobile phone in New Delhi, India.

Photo: AusAID

Introduction

The Australian Government is committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – agreed targets set by the world’s nations to reduce poverty by 2015.

The MDGs include halving extreme poverty, getting all children into school, closing the gap on gender inequality, saving lives lost to disease and lack of health care, protecting the environment and working on a global partnership for development.

Gender equality is central to achieving these goals. Actively supporting women’s full participation in economic, social and political life is a key factor in reducing poverty, enhancing economic growth and democratic governance, and increasing the well-being of women, girls and their families.

Australia’s international development assistance program recognises that both women and men have a role to play in all aspects of development.

The government is committed to ensuring the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process. Improving the status of women is not just a women’s issue, but requires the active participation of both men and women.



Millennium Development Goal 1

Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger



MDG 1 is focussed on reducing the number of people that live in poverty and hunger, and achieving full employment for all.

Women are less likely than men to be in paid employment. In many countries, women have restricted access to land and property, and face difficulty in accessing formal credit. These factors mean women are more likely to be living in poverty than men.

By targeting women as part of efforts to eradicate poverty, children, families and communities also benefit.



BRAC is supporting women in Bangladesh to break the poverty cycle.
Photo: BRAC



Putting it into practice

In Bangladesh, the Australia Government is supporting the work of BRAC, to support women living in extreme poverty.

BRAC is the largest non-government organisation in Bangladesh. The “Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction” program is designed to lift over three million extremely poor people out of poverty by 2012.

This program is targeted at women. Many of them are single women with responsibility for feeding the whole family.

It seeks to support extremely poor women to establish small businesses and earn an income by:

- providing productive assets such as cows or goats
- delivering intensive training to ensure successful generation of income from these assets
- providing a regular cash stipend until their new small business creates a stable livelihood.

The Australian Government has provided \$49.1 million from 2007-2012 to support this program.



Millennium Development Goal 2

Achieve Universal Primary Education



MDG 2 is focussed on ensuring that all boys and girls are able to complete primary school. Central to this goal is improving the literacy rates of young men and women.

Women and girls are much less likely to complete primary school and go on to higher levels of education. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has estimated that worldwide, there are almost twice as many illiterate women as there are men.

Ensuring that both boys and girls are able to attend school is a crucial part of reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. It means that men and women will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to contribute to their society.

Putting it into practice

In Indonesia, the Australian Government is building or extending 2075 junior secondary schools and madrasah tsanawiyah (Islamic junior secondary schools) through a funding commitment of \$387 million over five years.

These schools are providing education to the poorest and most disadvantaged Indonesian children, particularly girls. The schools are creating an additional 300,000 places and helping the Indonesian Government to meet its target for all children to receive nine years of education by 2010.

The schools are built to accommodate the particular needs of different groups of children, for example through disability inclusive design and the provision of separate toilet facilities for boys and girls.



Students at an Islamic junior secondary school in Indonesia.
Photo: AusAID



Millennium Development Goal 3

Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women



MDG 3 recognises that achieving equality between men and women is crucial to reducing poverty and ensuring that all people are able to fully participate in their communities.

This includes ensuring that both women and men hold positions as leaders in their communities; that they equally participate in all levels of education; and that they are equally able to undertake paid employment.

Internationally, the United Nations has recorded that women hold only 18.5 per cent of parliamentary seats, and in some countries there are no women in parliament. Men are also more likely to be employed, with 73 per cent of working-age men in employment, compared to only 50 per cent of women, based on estimates by the United Nations.

Putting it into practice

In 2009-10, the Australian Government is supporting scoping studies in Laos and Papua New Guinea as part of the World Bank's Adolescent Girls Initiative to assist the transition of young girls from education into productive employment. This initiative assists girls to complete their education, build skills that match market demand, find mentors and job placements, and offers incentives to potential employers to hire, retain and train young women.

The Adolescent Girls Initiative, a part of the World Bank Group's Gender Action Plan-Gender Equality as Smart Economics, is a global public-private partnership initiative launched in 2008 by the Nike Foundation, Goldman Sachs and the World Bank, to promote the economic empowerment of adolescent girls.



Millennium Development Goal 4

Reduce Child Mortality



MDG 4 aims to reduce the number of children who die before they are five.

Every day, more than 10,000 newborns die from preventable complications which occur during pregnancy, childbirth and the first week of life, based on estimates by the World Health Organisation. UNICEF has estimated that across the world in 2006, 9.7 million children died before their fifth birthday.

In many places, a preference for sons can mean that girls do not have the same access to food and health care as their brothers, and so are more at risk of dying before their fifth birthday.



Two children in Lamjung District, Nepal.
Photo: Sarah Boyd



Putting it into practice

In Nepal, the Australian Government is supporting UNICEF to reduce child mortality and malnutrition through Nepal's National Vitamin A Expansion Program. Australia has been supporting this program since 1999.

During 2008-2009, the Vitamin A expansion program provided high-dose Vitamin A to 3.7 million boys and girls aged between 6 months and 5 years old, and helped to prevent over 15,000 child deaths.

Vitamin A distribution coverage in Nepal is now above 90 per cent (91.7 per cent for girls and 92.4 per cent for boys) and Vitamin A deficiency is no longer a public health problem.



Millennium Development Goal 5

Improve Maternal Health



MDG 5 aims to improve maternal health through ensuring universal access to reproductive health services, including increasing the number of births attended by skilled health personnel and improving women's access to health care services during their pregnancies.

The World Health Organisation estimates that over half a million women every year die during pregnancy or childbirth, and over 90 per cent of these largely preventable deaths occur in developing countries.

Having births attended by skilled health personnel is the most effective way of preventing maternal deaths. It is also important to ensure that women have access to good pregnancy and after birth care, and are able to time and space their pregnancies using family planning.

Putting it into practice

In Ethiopia, 94 per cent of all births take place without a medically trained person in attendance, based on the national Demographic and Health Survey.

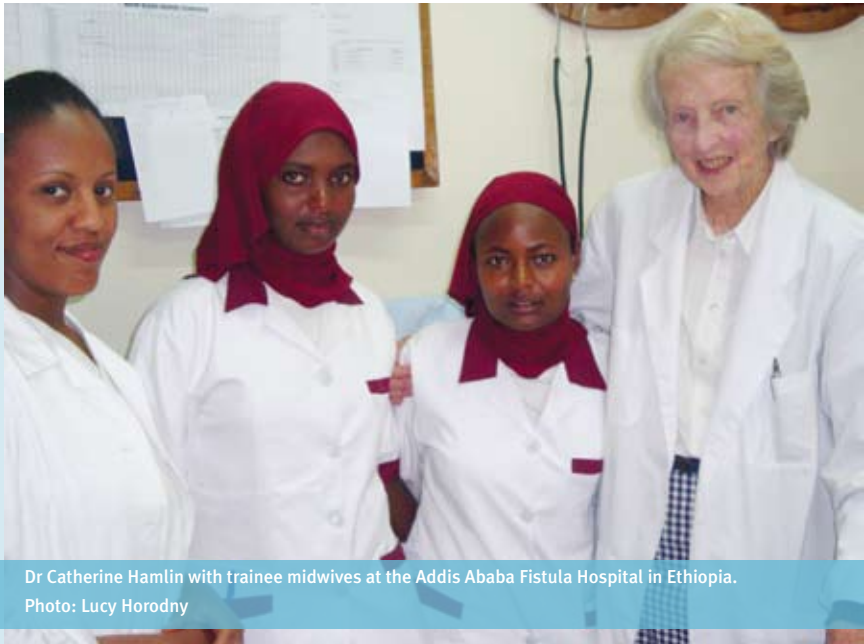
The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital is working to provide expectant mothers with access to trained midwives and health services in Ethiopia. The hospital was established in 1974 to treat women suffering from obstetric fistulae, a complication of labour that makes women incontinent, which then limits their participation in their communities and can result in infection and death.

The hospital's midwifery college is training young Ethiopian women to be skilled midwives. This will improve maternal health, and contribute to reducing the number of women and babies that die during childbirth. The hospital is also



establishing rural maternal health clinics to provide antenatal and maternal health services, providing women with skilled medical help during labour.

Through Australian Government funding of \$2.3 million over two years, 25 rural maternal health clinics will be built and the college will be expanded to increase the number of students from 12 to 60 students each year.



Dr Catherine Hamlin with trainee midwives at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia.
Photo: Lucy Horodny



Millennium Development Goal 6

Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases



MDG 6 aims to reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS, malaria and other major diseases. This is to be achieved through increasing young people's knowledge of HIV and AIDS; and improving access to appropriate drugs and other means to prevent and treat diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

Strategies to prevent HIV infection must address the vulnerabilities of both men and women.

Some ideas about masculinity, particularly those related to power and violence against women, have a significant impact on women's rights and increase HIV vulnerability for women and girls. Sustainable programs to change men's behaviour are therefore vital in reducing the spread of HIV. Some perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes also affect men and boys, and have negative impacts on their health. These too need to be addressed.



A member of Anglicare's STOPAIDS theatre group in Papua New Guinea. The group, which is supported by AusAID, stages plays at local markets, schools and other community places to help educate young people about HIV and AIDS.

Photo: Rocky Roe



Care and support strategies must also recognise that women often carry the greater burden of care where they or a family member are living with HIV.

Prevention strategies must also ensure that the most marginalised and vulnerable of women have their rights respected and have access to services.

Putting it into practice

In Papua New Guinea, the Australian Government is supporting the integration of gender issues, including measures to respond to violence against women, as part of its work with non-government organisations on HIV and AIDS.

In the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, a project is working to sensitise and use men as facilitators to run village-based activities on gender-based violence. Another project in the Eastern Highlands Province has increased involvement of female volunteers leading to increased interactions with women in the villages, increased distribution of female condoms and increased referrals of women to treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

In conjunction with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), AusAID supports advanced training for counsellors working with survivors of gender-based violence and the development of tools and training materials for advocacy on HIV and AIDS and gender.



Millennium Development Goal 7

Ensure Environmental Sustainability



MDG 7 is focussed on supporting sustainable development and reversing the loss and degradation of environmental resources. This incorporates increasing sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation, improving the lives of people living in slums and protecting forests and threatened animal species.

Access to safe drinking water can have a significant impact on the lives of women, by reducing the amount of time that women need to spend collecting water, and improving the health of women and their children through access to clean water.

Climate change will also affect men and women differently. In many countries across the world, women make up a larger proportion of the agricultural workforce than men, and so will be more affected by climate change that impacts on farming practices. Women's roles in caring for family members and children can also make them more vulnerable to natural disasters as they are less able to escape with their children and family from affected areas at short notice.

Putting it into practice

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Australian Government are supporting work in the Pacific to improve the way that disaster risk management and climate change policy and activities respond to the different needs of men and women.

In May 2009, AusAID and the UNDP released the report, *The gendered dimensions of disaster risk management and adaptation to climate change – Stories from the Pacific*.

The report sets out strategies for integrating gender into policy and programs for disaster risk management, climate change and natural resource management.



It is based on the expertise and experience of governments and civil society organisations from across the Pacific in addressing these issues.

It provides a guide for development practitioners working in the Pacific to ensure that the gender specific impacts of climate change and disasters are considered; and that both men and women are active participants in strategies to respond to climate change and disasters.

A young girl drinks clean running water in Solomon Islands.

Photo: AusAID



Millennium Development Goal 8

Develop a Global Partnership for Development



MDG 8 recognises the need for a global partnership in order to achieve development and eradicate poverty. This requires providing more and better development assistance and fairer trade to help countries that are committed to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are an essential part of this. A global partnership for development needs to involve men and women as partners and decision-makers, and to ensure that men and women benefit from the work of this partnership.



Representatives from AusAID and UNFPA join Dr Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director UNFPA and Stephen Smith, Minister for Foreign Affairs at the signing of a partnership agreement between AusAID and the UNFPA.

Photo: AusAID



Putting it into practice

Australia is supporting and strengthening United Nations (UN) leadership of global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals through partnership agreements with key UN agencies. A critical part of these agreements is ensuring that both men and women benefit from international work to achieve the MDGs.

For example, Australia's support will help advance the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on improving reproductive health, safe motherhood, reducing HIV, eliminating gender-based violence and promoting gender equality in the developing world. It will also assist in integrating sexual and reproductive health programs into emergency responses, so that when disasters strike there is still access to family planning services, assisted delivery and emergency obstetric care.

Australia's support to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will strengthen efforts to achieve gender equality and reduce violence towards women in the developing world.

Through the 'UN Partnership for MDGs' initiative, the Australian Government is investing \$200 million over 4 years from 2008-09 in additional core contributions to seven UN agencies.



