

GENDER JUSTICE: FROM MDGS TO SDGS

Christian Aid's vision for poverty eradication is rooted in a commitment to equality for all.

We believe that all human beings are created with equal, unique value, and that any obstacles preventing people from flourishing and fulfilling their potential should be overcome. We believe that poverty is not solely about a lack of income but rather about powerlessness. It therefore follows that poverty cannot be eradicated in a world where gender discrimination prevents women and girls from exercising power over their own lives and bodies, within the household and within their communities.

Learning from the MDGs

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have played a positive role in focusing attention on some key areas where progress and investment has been desperately needed – maternal health, education, water and sanitation. The inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality was a vital recognition of both the disproportionate impact of poverty on women and girls, and also the positive role that they must be allowed to play if we are collectively to achieve sustainable development. However, the shortcomings of the stand-alone goal have also been stark: while we are close to achieving gender parity in primary

school enrolment, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* reveals that only 2 out of 130 countries have achieved gender parity at all levels of education.¹ In sub-Saharan Africa, the gender gap in relation to tertiary education actually widened between 2000 and 2011. Christian Aid's own research in Latin America has shown that there are also persistent challenges in ensuring the completion of schooling among girls, especially girls from poorer communities.² In Nicaragua, less than 10% of poor girls living in rural areas attend secondary school, compared with 75% of their rich urban counterparts.

Other important areas for gender equality which were identified through the MDG 3 indicators but not through the targets, have failed to receive the necessary political attention. The average share of female members of parliament is still only 20% – a universal problem, which is also shared by wealthier countries such as the United Kingdom. The indicator on non-agricultural wage employment also reveals patchy progress: in western Asia, northern Africa and southern Asia, the percentage of women in these kinds of jobs is less than 20%. Meanwhile, it is women who continue to dominate in precarious, low-paid roles, often as domestic workers, and who continue to shoulder the burden of unpaid caring responsibilities.

'A stand-alone goal on gender equality was a vital recognition of the disproportionate impact of poverty on women and girls'

MDG 3

Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Indicators:

- 3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

‘The Post-2015 agenda should be ambitious, and the global community should, first and foremost, listen to the voices of women and girls’

The evidence indicates that it has been hard, even in the context of MDG 3, to mobilise funding and investment for gender equality and this is especially the case for an area such as gender-based violence which was omitted entirely from the MDGs. *The Government Spending Watch Report 2013* highlights particular concerns at a national level.³ This report notes that while gender budgeting is being used effectively in countries such as Rwanda, Bangladesh and India, there are currently no agreed global targets or costings for spending specifically targeted at women and girls. Designated funding by agencies responsible for women’s empowerment and rights constitutes only 0.4% of GDP, and less than 0.2% in a number of countries. The lack of data on gender spending makes it difficult to track but the report estimates that since 2009, two-thirds of countries have seen a *decrease* in gender-specific spending as a percentage of GDP. In addition, it is of course important to consider wider sustainable development spending from a gender perspective

and also to explore the implications of macroeconomic policies for women and girls. This approach was not incentivised through the MDGs but could be developed and driven through new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Potential for Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Post-2015 sustainable development agenda offers a significant opportunity to deepen and widen the global commitment to gender justice. While not legally binding in the same way as an instrument such as CEDAW, Christian Aid argued in our 2013 report, *The World We Want to See: Perspectives on Post-2015* that the Post-2015 goals should play an important role in establishing norms, pushing up standards and driving investment into key areas such as gender equality.⁴ It is our view that the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda should be ambitious and that the global community should, first and foremost, listen to the voices of women and girls.

Listening to women and girls

UCF Angola, members of the World YWCA

‘Women’s economic empowerment is vital to eradicating poverty and inequalities. Women and girls should have access to education opportunities to develop their skills as entrepreneurs, through internships, scholarships and educational exchanges at national, regional and global level. It is essential that women’s access to job opportunities is guaranteed, together with the adoption of policies that protect female domestic workers from exploitation. Fair policies should also be put in place to make sure that women, young and old, have the right to land and property.’

Afghan Women’s Network (AWN)

‘From our perspective, any new development framework or Post-2015 goals should focus, without doubt, on the tangible inclusion of women in all aspects of social, economic and political life. This will need to go beyond MDG 3 and a narrow focus on education... The Post-2015 agenda must include specific targets to ensure that funding is allocated from government budgets and from donors to enable the full participation of women in activities. New targets should also result in specific budget lines that allow women to participate in employment and public life. This will include funding for the provision of day-care, adequate, safe and secure transportation, the provision of toilets at work, and flexible working hours.’

Steps on the road to gender justice

In developing the Post-2015 framework, leaders should also be seeking to identify good practice in local communities and exploring how new goals and targets could boost this kind of work.

Christian Aid works with local partners around the world who are breaking new ground in their calls for gender justice. They are often working in a difficult environment and without many resources, but can use global agreements including rights-based instruments such as CEDAW to underpin their work. Supporting organisations like these is essential

for the implementation and delivery of promises made at a global level. It is also essential for achieving social and cultural change and faith-based organisations in particular have a critical role to play. At times, faith-based organisations have had a part in reproducing damaging norms, but some are increasingly taking a lead role in challenging and changing them. The Post-2015 sustainable development agenda will only be a success if governments are held accountable for the delivery of goals and targets at a local level and if the framework recognises the need to engage a wide range of partners, including faith-based actors.

‘Christian Aid’s partner SADD works with church leaders to ensure they play a positive role in protecting the rights of women’

In Iraq, levels of domestic violence are high, and women’s rights organisations report that they have seen incidences of violence, including ‘honour killing’, increase over the past few years. Perpetrators are often not brought to justice and those crimes usually go unpunished. Women who are considered to have dishonoured the family in some way, such as a suspected romantic or sexual relationship outside marriage (even in cases of rape) or perhaps just trying to leave an abusive situation, may find themselves at risk of being murdered by their family. Forced and underage marriage rate also continues to be high. Christian Aid’s partner in northern Iraq, ASUDA, runs shelters for women victims of domestic violence; making a real difference in protecting lives. ASUDA has also successfully campaigned for an amendment to the law so that ‘honour killings’ which used to carry a three month prison sentence are now treated as murders in the penal code.

In 2006, the Brazilian government passed a law on domestic violence, to punish perpetrators and to provide care and rehabilitation services to victims. However, in Brazilian society violence against women is

still considered a private matter, something not to be talked about. One of Christian Aid’s partners, SADD (Anglican Service on Diaconia and Development) works with church leaders to produce resources that promote biblical and theological reflections for the church on their role in the prevention of violence. This helps to ensure they play a positive role in protecting the rights of women in their communities.

Sierra Leone recently passed three vital laws to protect women. Domestic violence is now a criminal offence, women are able to inherit property, and girls are protected from early and forced marriage. But these laws only offer protection in theory – the reality on the ground is still very different.

That’s where the Koinadugu Women’s Group come in. The group is a collective of 30 organisations that help women to develop the skills and confidence they need to take up leadership roles in their communities, and make sure that these laws are fully implemented in their local area. This work has been supported by ENCISS, an initiative of UK aid and the EU, managed by Christian Aid.

Recommendations for a Post-2015 development agenda

In this context, Christian Aid is arguing for new goals and targets aimed at driving transformational change and achieving a fundamental shift in power relations between men and women. We thoroughly welcome the contribution that UN Women has made so far to this debate and **we stand with them in calling for a stand-alone goal** within the new framework on gender equality and women's empowerment.⁵ We also support their suggested target areas, including the recommendation for a new target on eradicating violence against women and girls.

As already illustrated throughout this paper, getting the targets right is absolutely essential as resources and political attention are likely to flow into these areas as a result of their adoption. Some of the options which have already been put forward and which we believe are worthy of consideration are listed below.

Mainstreaming gender through the framework

In addition to our call for a stand-alone goal, Christian Aid is calling for gender considerations to be mainstreamed throughout the Post-2015 framework. Without knowing which goal areas are to be agreed, this is clearly a complex process but we would like to see the following areas being covered through targets and indicators under other Post-2015 goals:

- sexual and reproductive health
- education (beyond primary) for women and girls
- access to water and sanitation
- access to sustainable energy
- support for small-holder farmers
- the role of women in natural resource management
- gender-responsive budgeting
- access to justice for women and girls
- the participation of women in peace-building processes.

'Getting the targets right is absolutely essential as resources and political attention are likely to flow into these areas'

Possible targets: violence against women and girls

- Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (High-Level Panel report⁶).
- End child marriage (High-Level Panel report).

Possible targets: participation of women and girls in political and public life

- Eliminate discrimination against, and increase the participation and influence of, women at all levels of public and political life (VSO).⁷
- Support pathways to women's

empowerment in public and political life.

- Increase the proportions of leadership positions held by women in public and private sectors to 40% or better (UN Global Compact).⁸

Possible targets: economic justice for women and girls

- Promote decent work for women (UN Women).
- Ensure equal rights of women to own and inherit property, sign a contract, register a business and open a bank account (High-Level Panel report).
- Reduce women's time burdens (UN Women).





‘It is not sufficient to leave no-one behind. Christian Aid believes that we must also close the gap.’

We also urge policy makers to consider how gender inequality intersects with wider inequalities, including economic inequality. Research by academics such as Naila Kabeer and Kevin Watkins has shown how inequalities compound and how, for example, education outcomes for girls from poorer families, from ethnic minorities and living in rural communities, are considerably worse because of the multiplying impact.⁹

It follows that the new sustainable development agenda must also address the discrimination and persistent poverty experienced by marginalised groups, including the disparities that result, which is a point well made through the

recent global consultations with civil society.¹⁰ The disaggregation of data by economic and social groups (defined through an open and participatory process at the national level) will therefore be an essential component of a successful Post-2015 framework, as will an explicit goal or target on income inequality to address the widening gulf between the haves and the have-nots, many of whom are women. It is not sufficient to ‘leave no-one behind’. Christian Aid believes that we must also ‘close the gap’.

Macroeconomics and gender

The amount of funds leaking from Brazil in tax evasion schemes is almost 20 times larger than what the government spends with the globally-recognised conditional cash transfer programme Bolsa Familia, according to the Brazilian Union of Prosecutors for the National Treasury (called Sinprofaz by its Portuguese initials).

Sinprofaz is a member of the ‘End Tax Havens’ campaign locally in Brazil, championed by Christian Aid partner INESC.¹¹

The data presented by Sinprofaz – which shows BRL 415bn (\$171.3bn) lost to tax evasion

in Brazil – represents 10% of the Brazilian GDP and 25% of what is collected in taxes, while Bolsa Familia had budgeted for 2013, BRL 23.9bn (\$9.9bn), a 60% increase of the BRL 16bn (\$6.61bn) for 2012.¹² The Tax Justice Network corroborates that report with information based in 2011 data from the World Bank.

This comparison shows that the amount allocated to Bolsa Familia is much smaller than it could be and the amount lost to tax havens could have had an enormous impact in tackling other issues that make inequality a structuring part of Brazilian society.

Recommendations

In summary, Christian Aid believes that a Post-2015 sustainable development agenda should include:

1. A stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. New targets addressing:
 - i. violence against women and girls
 - ii. participation of women and girls in political and public life
 - iii. economic justice for women and girls including equal access to and control of resources e.g. land and finance.
3. Mainstreaming of gender considerations throughout the whole Post-2015 framework in areas including health (including

sexual and reproductive health), education, food security, governance, and peace and security.

4. Strong support for the 'data revolution' including disaggregated data by gender, economic quintile, age, disability, caste, ethnicity and other relevant criteria.
5. A complementary goal or target, in addition to the stand-alone goal on gender, to reduce income inequality.

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Endnotes

- 1 *UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*, www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/report-2013/mdg-report-2013-english.pdf
- 2 *The Scandal of Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Christian Aid, 2012, www.christianaid.org.uk/images/scandal-of-inequality-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.pdf
- 3 *Putting Progress at Risk? Government Spending Watch Report 2013* www.governmentspendingwatch.org/images/pdfs/GSW-Report-Progress-at-risk-MDG_160513.pdf
- 4 *The World We Want to See: Perspectives on Post-2015*, Christian Aid, 2013 www.christianaid.org.uk/images/Post-2015-Christian-Aid-report-September-2013.pdf
- 5 *A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components*, UN Women, 2013 www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2013/10/UNWomen_post2015_positionpaper_English_final_web%20pdf.pdf
- 6 *A New Global Partnership: Eradicating Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, 2013 www.post2015hlp.org/the-report/
- 7 *Women in Power: beyond access to influence in a post-2015 world*, VSO, 2013 www.vso.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/women-in-power
- 8 *Corporate Sustainability and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda: perspectives from UN Global Compact participants on global priorities and how to engage business towards sustainable development goals*, 2013 www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/9.1_news_archives/2013_06_18/UNGC_Post2015_Report.pdf
- 9 'Inequality as a barrier to human development', Kevin Watkins speech, 2013, p16 http://kapuscinskilectures.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Kevin_Watkins_lecture.pdf
- 10 *A Million Voices: the World We Want – A Sustainable Future with Dignity for All*, UNDG, 2013, p18-19, www.undg.org/docs/13183/Million%20Voices%20-%20First%20Section.pdf
- 11 'Fim aos paraísos fiscais: SINPROFAZ apoia iniciativa', 2012 www.sinprofaz.org.br/s/noticias/fim-aos-paraísos-fiscais-sinprofaz-apoia-iniciativa
- 12 'Sonegação alcança 10% do PIB, diz estudo do Sinprofaz', www.sonegometro.com/artigos/sonegacao-alcanca-10-do-pib-diz-estudo-do-sinprofaz

Christian Aid has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality. We urge you to join us.

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