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**Development Account Project on enhancing social inclusion,
gender equality and health promotion in the Millennium
Development Goals in Africa**

E-discussion series

**Summary report on the e-discussion on promoting the social
inclusion of women and gender equality in the Millennium
Development Goals in Africa**

June 2008

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Acronyms

ACGS	African Centre for Gender and Social Development
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CoP	Community of Practice
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EDPRS	Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
HIV	Human immune deficiency virus
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
STDs	Sexually transmitted diseases
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Acknowledgements

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Promoting the social inclusion of women and gender equality in the Millennium Development Goals in Africa

1. Background to the Community of Practice

Under the project “*Strengthening Social Inclusion, Gender Equality and Health Promotion in the Millennium Development Goals in Africa*”, the African Centre for Gender and Social Development (ACGS) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) organized a series of e-discussions to provide a platform for experts on poverty reduction, gender, social protection and inclusion and the MDGs to share experiences, learn from one another, discuss and, as far as possible, recommend supplementary targets and indicators for the MDGs in the areas of social inclusion, gender equality, disability, ageing, youth, sexual and reproductive health, and health equity. The series began with a four-week-long moderated e-discussion entitled *Promoting the Social Inclusion of Women and Gender Equality in the MDGs in Africa*, held from 21 April to 20 May 2008.

The discussion was hosted by the MDGs Poverty Analysis and Monitoring Section of ACGS, whose main task is to conduct research and prepare policy papers on the MDGs and poverty, provide advisory services on the MDGs to member States, the regional economic communities, the private sector and other stakeholders on poverty reduction strategies and pro-poor policies, and prepare annual reports on the progress made in achieving the targets of the MDGs in Africa, in collaboration with the African Union and the African Development Bank.

This Community of Practice was made up of fifty experts from the twenty-two African countries actively involved in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The experts were drawn from Governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and development partners. The diversity of experience and the areas of work of this Community of Practice (CoP) allowed for an interesting and enriching exchange of ideas and country experiences.

The e-discussion had three objectives. The first was to stimulate discussion and generate knowledge on the major forms of social exclusion of women and the reasons for the persistent gender inequalities. The second was to make the discussion a forum for sharing knowledge on countries’ approaches to gender inequalities. The third and last objective was to help identify supplementary targets or indicators in the MDGs that could allow for more effective measurement of the social inclusion of women and gender equality in Africa.

This report provides a synthesis of the e-discussion under three key thematic areas: (i) major forms of gender inequality and the ways in which women are socially excluded; (ii) actions taken by countries to address the social exclusion of women and improve gender equality, as well as the challenges experienced and policy implications; and (iii) ways in which the MDGs could be reinforced to address gender equality and the social inclusion of women, and the suggested additional MDG indicators for more effective monitoring of gender equality and social inclusion of women in development. The last section of the report highlights the main conclusions of the e-discussion.

2. Major forms of gender inequality and the ways in which women are socially excluded

The discussants broadly affirmed that African women were excluded socially, economically and politically. For example, in low-income households, boys were given priority in regard to the limited education budget. Perpetual favoritism of little boys over little girls translated in adulthood into unequal access to employment, health facilities and decision-making authority. In some families, girls were continuously alienated from their male siblings and were taught that boys were superior, all the while being groomed for marriage. In such contexts, most girls were married off without their knowledge or consent, and were seen as a source of income, given the fact that the parents received a bride price.

The participants noted that gender inequalities were still prevalent in terms of access to sexual and reproductive health. The level of control men had over women determined the latter's general health and reproductive health status. Women had limited access to information regarding their sexual and reproductive health and lacked the power to change the situation. Thus, they were unable to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Women living with disability were at great disadvantage as a result of the physical and financial difficulties that they faced in accessing health facilities. They were also discriminated against because of existing social taboos, particularly in rural areas. Participants further noted that elderly women were increasingly dependent and marginalized in terms of access to health care and other social services because they lacked the necessary resources.

Participants indicated that rural women were more prone to social exclusion than urban women. However, urban women - even the educated ones - faced discrimination when seeking employment in government institutions, political parties and in the society at large. The discussants noted that gender parity in decision-making was yet to be achieved. In most cases, women were able to participate in decision-making discussions only with the consent of their husbands. The discussants further indicated that women were subject to many types of abuse by their husbands (emotional, verbal and physical), which weakened their ability to participate in decision-making at household level.

Despite the rise in the number of women in parliament and involved in politics, they were yet to be involved in significant numbers in political parties. In The Comoros, for example, only 28 per cent of decision-making and senior positions in the country's public service were occupied by women as against 72 per cent by men. In middle management and technical positions in the public sector, women accounted for 29 per cent of the posts as against 71 per cent by men.

Lack of economic empowerment of women was identified as a major form of their social exclusion. As noted by the participants from Burundi, women lacked economic independence in the household and depended almost entirely on the income that their husbands generated and managed. Even where women engaged in small-scale trading to supplement the household income, it was the husbands who decided what to do with the additional income. The discussants noted that, most often, such situations tended to affect women with little or no

education. Participants were informed that in Mauritania women comprised 29 per cent of the working population and that over 67 per cent of them were illiterate. Without appropriate education and skills, women were excluded from the labour market. In Madagascar, even with the same qualifications as men, women still faced difficulties in being hired, in being treated equally, and in receiving equal pay. In the private sector, senior positions remained exclusively male dominated.

The major reasons behind the continued social exclusion of women were identified as including patriarchal values, family ideals, traditional and cultural norms, lack of economic independence on the part of women, their limited or lack of access to education, their under-representation in decision-making positions, and lack of knowledge of their legal rights. Participants indicated that the root causes of gender inequality were discriminatory traditional practices and beliefs, and lack of education. They noted that the notion of male superiority over females was taught from a very young age. Participants further noted that social exclusion of women was mainly an outcome of the low investments in women's human capital at household and national levels.

Gender inequality is primarily rooted in traditions, followed by lack of education.

Since the social exclusion of women started at a very young age when they are still girls, they were excluded from accessing the important basic essentials for human development (education, health and economic dependence), resulting in a vicious cycle that perpetuated itself across generations. A detailed presentation on the status of women in Madagascar provides an in-depth and contextualized insight into gender inequality (see box 1).

Box 1: Focus on Madagascar

Malagasy society has been described as structured along the lines of age and sex, thus increasing the risk of domination over girls and young women. At the socio-cultural level, while children are viewed as a source of wealth, male babies are shown preference right from birth, given the perception that they represent the future and stability of the family; and female babies are groomed to take care of household chores. In marriage, women are exchanged for a bride price. As newlywed couples live in the groom's house, the women are relegated to a position of inferiority. Throughout marriage, women are bound by traditional division of labour. In some cultural groups, widows are passed over as inheritors of their deceased husbands in favour of the deceased's sons.

In terms of education, although legislative provisions stipulate that girls and boys should have equal access to education, girls tend to be disfavoured, as they are tied down by excessive domestic chores. In times of economic hardship, they are the ones to work as hired help or in the sex trade, thus discontinuing their education. They tend to be less likely to be registered at birth, and thus lack the proper documentation to attend school. In addition, girls do not receive sexual and family planning education, and thus are ill-equipped to protect themselves from early marriage, STDs and unwanted pregnancies. Because girls do not have equal opportunities to education as boys, they are, as adults, not able to reap the advantages derived from higher education. While this situation largely applies to women in rural areas, women in urban areas for their part face discrimination in accessing employment, in attaining high-level positions, in holding decision-making positions and in being involved in political movements.

3. Actions taken by countries to address the social exclusion of women and improve gender equality; the challenges experienced and policy implications

Participants shared experiences on the actions that their countries had taken to address gender inequalities and the social exclusion of women.

3.1 Actions taken by countries

This section highlights some of the actions taken by African Governments to address gender inequality and improve the social inclusion of women, as identified in the e-discussion.

Ratification of international and regional instruments: Participants noted that their countries had ratified the international and regional instruments that promoted gender equality and inclusion of women in development. Some countries had made progress in domesticating the frameworks by developing relevant policies and laws.

Promotion of gender parity in education: Participants noted that Governments, NGOs and development partners had put in place strategies to upscale the enrolment of girls in school, such as free primary education, increased numbers of female teachers to serve as role models, and other measures. In Chad, girls had started outnumbering boys in schools; and in Burundi, while the number of school children had generally increased, that of the girls in particular had seen a steep rise as a result of free primary education.

Free primary education has improved enrolment of girls.

Promotion of access to health: Concrete actions are being taken by Governments to foster gender parity in terms of access to health and improved access to sexual and reproductive health. In Mali, the Government provides free health services for caesarean delivery and for treatment of tuberculosis, as well as free access to malaria treatment for women and children. In Burundi, the Government has devised a policy that provides free healthcare for children under five years of age, and for child birth. This policy has resulted not only in reduced infant mortality but also in decreased maternal deaths. In Senegal, the provision of free childbirth services, including caesarean operations and treatment of fistula in medical centres, has greatly improved the health of women (see box 2).

Establishment of a legal framework that promotes gender equality: Participants noted that many countries had developed legal frameworks that promoted gender equality. The Government of Mali had adopted a new family code and other laws that paved the way for greater political representation of women and discouraged traditional practices harmful to girls and women.

Gender mainstreaming into national development policies and poverty reduction strategies: Countries have formulated or are formulating national development plans and poverty reduction strategies that are gender mainstreamed. For example, in Rwanda, the Government, in cooperation with the UNDP and SNV Netherlands, is undertaking an MDG project for establishing the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and enhancing the capacity of local Governments to integrate gender into the planning and

implementation of the EDPRS at local level. In Burundi, gender has been mainstreamed into all sectors of national development.

Box 2: Focus on Senegal

In terms of bridging the gender gap and promoting the social inclusion of women, Senegal has, through specific measures that target women, registered significant improvements that could inspire other African countries. The improvements include:

- Significant advances in training and education levels for women, with the rate of primary school completion for girls jumping from 59.7 per cent in 1996 to 71.6 per cent in 2002
- Policies and programmes that take on board all health dimensions concerning women and girls, resulting in the mortality rate dropping from 18/1000 in 1988 to 10/1000 in 2002, and in the life expectancy rate going up from 54 to 56.37 years during the same period
- Free childbirth and reproductive health services
- Improving access to means of production and financial resources for women
- Increasing the number of women in decision-making, in government and in parliament, as well as in administrative and judicial positions
- Boosting development actors' gender skills through awareness-building and training sessions provided by the Ministry of Women's Affairs' "Gender and Capacity-building Project". The project has developed methodological guides that take into account gender issues in development projects and programmes
- Setting up a women support and training centre at community level, under the President's initiative, to tackle the problems of accessing information and to promote and protect women's fundamental rights
- Planned creation of a national directorate for gender equity and equality as well as a watchdog group protecting the rights of women and children
- Institutionalized equality in fiscal matters, particularly with regard to salary levels
- Progressive mainstreaming of gender in the national budget
- Right of women to assume medical responsibility for her husband and children
- Right of women to join military, paramilitary, police and customs units

3.2 Challenges experienced by countries in promoting gender equality and social inclusion of women

High school dropout rates for girls: Countries are still experiencing a high dropout rate for girls at all levels of education, partly because of excessive domestic chores, including transporting water and firewood over long distances; early marriage; need to walk long distances to reach the nearest school; economic poverty of families which compels girls to work as hired help in other households or engage in the sex trade; and lack of birth certificates, which disqualifies girls from sitting for official examinations, thereby denying them adequate schooling. In the rural areas of Chad, for example, parents may withdraw their daughters from school at any time and marry them off, particularly if the groom is wealthy and can afford an expensive bride price.

Strong presence of discriminatory traditional practices: Despite the advances made in the legal, regulatory and administrative domains, women continue to be disadvantaged because of discriminatory traditional practices. This discrimination was noted to be particularly true in rural areas, home to more than 75 per cent of the population, and where traditions survive unscathed. Participants also noted that relations between men and women were built on the existing gender discriminatory status which perpetuated values, stereotypes and taboos, thus shaping the various roles assumed by women in the family, the community and the society. It was needful to change those values and stereotypes through awareness-building measures at all levels, starting from the household.

Continued existence of legal provisions and laws that do not conform to CEDAW: Participants noted that some countries still had laws and legal provisions that did not conform to CEDAW. Those gaps in the legal framework severely constrained the promotion of gender equality and the inclusion of women in development.

Lack of enforcement of laws that discourage gender discrimination: Participants noted that although countries had adopted several laws devoted to the legal equality of men and women, women were still discriminated against because of their gender due to inadequate enforcement of the enacted laws. Violence against women and girls, - for example rape, incest, sexual exploitation of young girls and sexual harassment, persisted because perpetrators remained largely unpunished.

Violence against women and girls is a major constraint to achieving gender equality.

Lack of knowledge of the supportive legal provisions: Participants noted that lack of knowledge of the legal instruments enacted to protect the rights of women was a major challenge constraining the efforts that Governments had invested to create supportive legal frameworks. It was also observed that complex legal procedures deterred women from asserting their rights.

Inadequate funding and expertise: Lack of adequate funding and human resource expertise to support implementation of the programmes required to promote gender equality. Participants noted that Government budgets for the promotion of gender equality continued to be insignificant in relation to the needs.

Lack of adequate social security and protection: Adequate social security and protection was required to improve the ability of women, particularly elderly women living with disability, to access health services.

Limited research work and gender-disaggregated data: Participants noted that some research work (both quantitative and qualitative) on existing disparities between men and women had been conducted in a systematic manner and had informed policymaking. They indicated however that sex- and gender-disaggregated data were still scarce, whereas such data were required to calculate the indicators needed to monitor progress in gender equality.

Absence of watchdog committees tasked with ensuring that women's fundamental rights are recognized: Participants noted that lack of monitoring the implementation of the supportive legal framework on the ground was limiting the progress that countries had made in promoting gender equality. It was important to create institutions that could be mandated to closely monitor progress in promoting women's rights at country and regional levels.

3.3 Policy implications

To address the challenges experienced by countries in the promotion of gender equality and social inclusion of women, participants proposed the following policy measures:

- **Addressing the root causes of gender discrimination**

They emphasized that it was important to address the root causes of gender discrimination, i.e., discriminatory traditions/cultural beliefs. They suggested that promoting a culture of gender equality began in the household and highlighted the need for increased sensitization to the importance of providing equal access to education, health and other services for male and female children.

- **Domestication of international and regional instruments on gender equality and improved enforcement**

Full domestication of the international and regional instruments on women's rights was vital. Participants suggested that it was important that national legislations fully incorporate these instruments. They also proposed that existing legislations be strictly enforced if the required change was to be achieved. Additionally, they noted that it was important to fully sensitize both the public and law implementers to the existence of new laws and to provide training and assistance to women to enable them to successfully navigate complex legal procedures.

- **Elimination of gender-based violence**

The participants suggested that it was important to actively combat violence against girls and women and to ensure that perpetrators were punished. They also emphasized that eradication of the social and cultural practices harmful to women and girls was important for achieving gender equality.

- **Improved resources and investment for gender equality and inclusion of women in development**

Participants noted that women's human capital was as valuable as men's human capital. It was therefore important to invest equally in the human capital of both men and women at household and national levels. It was similarly important that Governments allocate increased resources for investments that could bring about gender parity in human capital development. Such investments should also address the rural-urban gaps in gender matters. Participants recommended the creation of an environment in which the inclusion of girls and women into mainstream development would be sustainable.

Women's human capital is as valuable as men's human capital.

- **Recognition of the unpaid work of women**

Participants stated that it was necessary to recognize the importance and value (social and monetary) of the time taken by women to raise and educate children, and to consider remunerating them for those efforts.

- **Improved research and collection of gender-disaggregated statistical data**

Participants noted that it was important to systematically collect sex- and gender-disaggregated data, and to conduct research essential for monitoring and evaluating the progress made towards the social inclusion of women and to inform policymaking (see box 3). The participants emphasized that such research should be qualitative and quantitative. They noted that it was important to conduct participatory rapid assessments and gender analysis in order to establish poverty differentials among boys and girls, and among women and men.

Box 3: Research to inform policymaking

Example 1: In West Africa, the network *Regentic* recently undertook a study that showed the extent of the gender-based digital divide in French West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal). This research provides crucial information to decision-makers and political appointees responsible for information, communication and technology policies who intend to implement inclusive policies that take into account gender-based particularities. In addition, the indicators and targets used to measure the digital divide in this pioneer work offer researchers and institutions in the information technology society the tools, methodological support and baselines to gauge the evolution of equity in the society.

Example 2: In Ghana, during the implementation of the first Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, a poverty social impact study was undertaken to establish poverty differentials among various groups. This led to the development of a social protection strategy as well as the establishment of a “Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty” programme aimed at providing monthly stipends for economically vulnerable women and socially excluded groups.

- **Scaling up measures that economically empower women**

Participants suggested that there was the need to scale up measures that could economically empower women. These include measures to improve women’s access to land, property, technologies and other means of production. Participants also suggested an increase in the proportion of female entrepreneurs with access to development programmes on training, credit financing, marketing support and trade; and the creation of an enabling environment with affirmative action measures that paved the way for more women to work in the formal sector. It was necessary to promote equality between men and women in regard to salary, leave and pension.

Improve women’s right to land and property.

- **Strengthening women’s political participation and influence in decision-making**

Participants suggested that there was need to institute affirmative action measures to improve the number of women participating in national decision-making institutions (president’s office, parliament, government, etc) and other key public and private decision-making bodies. Support for women’s participation in planning and budgetary processes at national and local levels could strengthen women’s influence in decision-making and enhance recognition of their priorities and needs. In this regard, strengthening national women’s councils and local leadership in gender-based planning and budgeting were essential.

- **Enhancing girls' and women's access to education and training**

Although some progress had been achieved in gender parity in primary education, participants suggested that there was need to step up the rates of primary and secondary education completion by both boys and girls; enrolment of girls in tertiary and vocational education, and literacy rates amongst boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 25, as well as amongst adult women. Participants also suggested that there was need to introduce in the school curriculum subjects on gender equality, gender-based violence and STDs/AIDS education.

- **Strengthening girls' and women's access to health, including sexual and reproductive health**

Improved geographical and financial access to health services for women is an imperative if development is to become more inclusive of women. Participants suggested the need to increase the rate of access to contraceptive methods for women in the reproductive age group; upscale the proportion of teenage girls and boys who have access to information and to high-quality reproductive health services; increase the proportion of the male/female population that has access to information, and to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. The participants also emphasized the need for improved investment to increase the proportion of households with access to clean water, sanitation facilities and cleaner sources of energy.

Improve women's and girls' access to health, including sexual and reproductive health.

- **Fostering social protection**

Participants suggested the strengthening of social protection to promote the social inclusion of women in development, especially vulnerable women such as women living with disability, elderly women and women living with HIV/AIDS.

- **Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**

The discussion suggested the need to more closely monitor the establishment of supportive legal and policy frameworks on the ground, to ensure progress towards gender equality and the social inclusion of women.

- **Documentation and dissemination of information on promoting gender equality and the social inclusion of women**

Participants noted that information-sharing was important in countries and between countries and was critical to the success of achieving gender parity. There was need to intensify the documentation of experiences with successful and unsuccessful practices and widely disseminate this information. It was important for member States, development partners and international and regional bodies to identify systems that could facilitate wide exchange of information in the region.

4. Ways in which the MDGs could be reinforced to address the question of gender inequality and of the social inclusion of women, and the suggested additional MDG indicators

The participants pointed out that gender equality and the social inclusion of women were keys to any strategy that aimed to reduce social conflicts and tap into the productive potential of marginalized groups. Meeting the MDGs required addressing social exclusion in all its manifestations, because without tackling the reasons why women were more likely to be poor, it would not be possible to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Participants underlined the fact that the present MDGs did not adequately measure gender disparities in all aspects of life and the social exclusion of women. They emphasized the gaps in the current MDGs, including violence against women; women's and girls' lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services; the proportion of women living in poverty; women who have achieved full and productive employment; girls' completion rates at different levels of education; equality of men's and women's wages; the time used by boys and girls as well as by women and men to fetch water and fuel wood; the amount of assistance provided to promote gender equality and the ratio of HIV/AIDS infected women to men.

The ultimate aim of the e-discussion was to identify additional targets and indicators that could be used to monitor the progress made in the promotion of gender equality and the social inclusion of women in development. Contributors in the e-discussion suggested that, for the MDG targets and indicators to be effective in measuring the social inclusion of women in development, countries needed to collect gender-disaggregated data for the existing MDG indicators. Additionally, participants noted that most quantitative indicators masked qualitative issues that gave rise to inequalities, and suggested that it was crucial to undertake qualitative analysis to unpack the issues behind the figures.

Participants proposed the following supplementary indicators that could be used to reinforce the MDGs, in order to address gender inequality and social inclusion of women.

Suggested supplementary MDG indicators

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Proportion of women to men living below the poverty line
- Proportion of women to men who have achieved full and productive employment and decent work

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education

- Gender parity ratio at all levels of education
- Proportion of girls and boys that complete primary and secondary education

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

- Annual incidence of gender-based violence
- Wage gap between men and women in formal employment
- Proportion of women in decision-making positions in local government structures

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality

No additional indicators were suggested under this MDG

MDG 5: Improve maternal health

- Proportion of women and girls who have access to health centres and to quality services
- Proportion of women in the reproductive age bracket who have access to contraceptive methods
- Proportion of teenage girls and boys who have access to information and to high quality reproductive health services

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- Ratio of women to men aged 15 to 24 who are HIV positive

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

- Time used by boys and girls and by women and men to fetch water and fuel wood
- Proportion of households with access to clean energy sources

MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development

- Proportion of aid or development assistance spent on women's empowerment and gender equality issues

5. Conclusions

While there is need to appreciate the social, cultural and economic disparities existing among and within African countries in terms of gender relations and the exclusion of women, participants' contributions lead us to draw a number of conclusions: Africa cannot achieve the MDGs when the human capital of women (who constitute over 50 per cent of the continent's population) is underdeveloped. The major forms of social exclusion of women and gender inequalities are identified as social, economic and political in nature. Women are socially excluded when they fail to access key social services such as health (including sexual and reproductive health), education, training opportunities, sanitation, clean fuels, and when they are subjected to violence. Women are economically excluded when they are discriminated against on the labour market and in accessing factors of production such as capital and

technologies; and when they do not own land and property. Women are politically excluded when they fail to participate in public and private (in the home) decision-making that would have enabled them to bring their priorities and needs to bear on the decision-making agenda. The major reasons behind the continued social exclusion of women are: patriarchal values; family ideals; traditional and cultural norms; lack of economic independence on the part of women; limited or lack of access to education; under-representation in decision-making positions, and lack of knowledge of their legal rights.

It is clear from the discussions that, although Governments have instituted policy and legal reforms and scaled up strategies to promote gender equality, challenges still abound. Some of those identified include the resilience of discriminatory traditional practices; continued existence of legal provisions and laws inconsistent with CEDAW; lack of enforcement of the laws that discourage gender discrimination; lack of knowledge of supportive legal provisions; inadequate funding and human expertise; lack of adequate social security and protection; limited research work, limited availability of gender-disaggregated data, and absence of watchdog committees tasked with ensuring that women's fundamental rights are recognized.

There is need to address the root causes of gender discrimination, such as discriminatory traditions/cultural beliefs, and lack of education. Promotion of a culture of gender equality is a prerequisite, starting at the household level. Public awareness campaigns that particularly target parents and guardians on the importance of providing equal opportunities for boys and girls from a young age are essential. Equal access to education is necessary at all levels to groom a future generation shaped by notions of gender equality; and access to literacy programmes for adult women is vital in redressing past discrimination.

Increased resources for, and investment towards, gender equality and inclusion of women in development are essential, since women's human capital is as valuable as men's. Improved geographical and financial access to health services for women is imperative if development is to become more inclusive of women. Enhancing social protection, especially for vulnerable women such as those living with disability, elderly women and women living with HIV/AIDS, is key to achieving inclusive development. It is important to scale up measures that empower women economically, such as measures to improve women's access to land, property and technologies, and promotion of an enabling environment that allows more women to work in the formal sector. The unpaid work done by women needs to be recognized. There is need to institute measures to improve women's participation in politics.

Eliminate violence
against women and girls.

Participants further indicated that improved research and collection of gender-disaggregated statistical data were critical for monitoring and evaluating progress towards the social inclusion of women and for policymaking.

Participants identified the areas where the MDGs needed to be strengthened, and came up with supplementary indicators for effective monitoring of the social inclusion of women in development. As a general recommendation, all indicators need to be gender disaggregated. Contributors suggested additional indicators which focus on violence against women; women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services; the proportion of women living in poverty; women who have achieved full and productive employment; girls' completion rate for different levels of education; wage equality for men and women; time used by boys and girls and by women and men to fetch water and fuel wood; amount of assistance provided to promote gender equality, and the ratio of women to men living with HIV/AIDS.

It is crucial to monitor girls' completion rates for all levels of education

Annex: Selected resources

English:

1. [Millennium Development Goals - Basics](http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.html) - <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.html>
2. [Millennium Development Goals - List of Targets and Indicators](http://www.undp.org/mdg/goallist.shtml) – <http://www.undp.org/mdg/goallist.shtml>
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4. [Millennium Development Goals, 2007 Report](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/docs/UNSD_MDG_Report_2007e.pdf) – http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/docs/UNSD_MDG_Report_2007e.pdf
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