

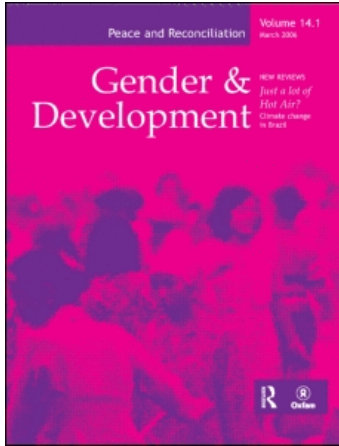
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Out of the margins: the MDGs through a CEDAW lens

Ceri Hayes

This article examines the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from a women's human rights perspective. It outlines some of the practical ways in which human rights principles, and the provisions set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in particular, can be used to ensure that the MDGs are met in a way that respects and promotes gender equality and women's human rights.¹

The inclusion of the goal to 'promote gender equality and empower women' (Goal 3) in the MDGs demonstrates the impact of many years of lobbying by the women's movement to promote gender equality and women's human rights in development. Nevertheless, many gender activists have expressed concern that the MDGs fail to represent the vision and commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment that are set out in key human rights instruments, such as CEDAW, and outcome documents of intergovernmental conferences of the 1990s. The most notable of these outcome documents is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

Given that the MDGs now play a central role in shaping development policy and practice nationally and internationally, women's human rights organisations, such as WOMANKIND Worldwide, have had to ask themselves how they might use the Goals to further the agenda of the international women's movement.

This article examines how CEDAW, and some of the other tools available to the CEDAW Committee, such as the CEDAW

reporting mechanism and the Committee's General Recommendations, which elaborate the Committee's view of the obligations assumed under the Convention, can be used to enhance and strengthen efforts to meet the MDGs by addressing gender inequality as one of the underlying causes of poverty. CEDAW is one of a number of legal instruments that have, over the years, elaborated upon the nature and scope of women's human rights. It is the only international human rights treaty to comprehensively address the issue of women's human rights. CEDAW needs to be considered in the context of other global human rights instruments, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). In this context, the provisions of CEDAW on women's human rights look considerably stronger than they do alone.

The article begins with a brief consideration of the challenges, opportunities, and paradoxes presented by the MDGs, from a women's human rights perspective. It then examines how the MDGs sit within the broader human rights agenda.

The final section focuses on CEDAW and the practical ways in which the Convention can inform and guide strategies for the implementation of the Goals to ensure that women and men benefit equally from development gains.

The MDGs: challenges, opportunities, and paradoxes

Adopted by the Heads of State and Government in September 2000, the Millennium Declaration (UN 2000) shares CEDAW's vision of a world where women and men are equal. It identifies gender equality as an essential ingredient for achieving all the MDGs and affirms the need to combat violence against women and to implement CEDAW.

Yet, this vision is not embraced by the MDGs themselves, or by the limited and (for the most part) gender-blind selection of targets and indicators chosen to monitor progress towards their fulfilment. Even Goal 3 has been interpreted in the narrowest sense, with a focus on the target of educational access to the exclusion of other barriers to gender equality, such as the devastating impact that gender-based violence has on women's lives. It also fails to take into account the fact that in some countries, particularly in Latin America, gender parity in education has already been attained and yet gender inequality is still a feature of these societies.

It is, of course, impossible to expect a set of universal goals to take account of the many differences between countries. In practice, efforts have been made to establish complementary goals and targets and to 'localise' the MDGs (that is, to interpret them in a way that reflects national and local development priorities and agendas). There is still a long way to go until the attainment of gender inequality and (in particular) the realisation of women's human rights are seen as cross-cutting issues in the

implementation of the Goals, but there are some examples of good practice.

One example is that the UNDP has been at the forefront of MDG 'scorekeeping' at the country level and has worked with governments and civil society to ensure that gender issues are built into the national Millennium Development Goal Reports (MDGRs). For instance, in Albania, a thematic Working Group on Gender was formed to establish a baseline against which to measure progress towards meeting the Goals. The process involved consultation with more than 650 stakeholders from all over Albania and has greatly enhanced national ownership of the process. It has also allowed the Goals to be translated into targets and indicators that are most appropriate for women at the sub-national level (UNDP Albania 2004).

Also at the national level, some countries, such as Viet Nam, have used their National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women as the basis for identifying targets and indicators towards meeting Goal 3 (UN in Viet Nam 2002), but this seems to be the exception rather than the norm. Given how far the MDGR process has advanced, national-level reporting does represent the best opportunity to build national commitment to women's rights and gender equality; but these processes must, of course, be accompanied by sufficient political will and resources. The MDGs do have broad support among governments and can offer gender activists the potential of a new impetus for old agendas, but existing approaches to implementation must be revised if the MDGs are not to reinforce traditional top-down approaches to development and add another layer of 'invisibilisation' for women.

Another example is at the international level. The UN Millennium Project's Task Force on Education and Gender Equality has produced a series of recommendations to strengthen the implementation of Goal 3, including a set of six strategic priorities, such

as the guarantee of sexual and reproductive health rights for girls and women, and an end to violence against women (Birdsall *et al.* 2004).

The MDGs and human rights

While the Millennium Declaration reaffirms states' commitment to promote human rights, the MDGs make no specific reference to human rights. Nevertheless, they do reflect a human rights agenda. Goal 1, for example, sets out time-bound targets for reducing poverty, one of the greatest denials of human rights. Also, Goals 4 (to reduce child mortality), 5 (to improve maternal health), and 6 (to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases) can be compared to the human right to health, set out in the core human rights treaties.

However, it is dangerous to assume that the MDGs will automatically contribute to the promotion of respect for human rights simply by addressing thematic human rights concerns (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1990). The case of China, which has seen impressive economic growth in recent years yet has an estimated 30m women 'missing' as a result of sex-selective abortions and infanticide (Seager 2003), highlights how a country can make progress towards the poverty-reduction goal while violations of women's human rights continue.

International human rights rest on a series of core principles, including equality, non-discrimination, and the fact that human rights are interdependent, i.e. equal attention must be given to the realisation of all rights. Thus, a human rights approach would forbid trade-offs being made by decision makers between economic growth and gender equality. It reminds us that progress in development can be measured only by improvements in the lives of *all* individuals.

A human rights approach would place as much emphasis on the importance of *process*

as it does on outcome. For instance, the human rights principles of participation and empowerment demand the meaningful involvement of poor people in all stages of the MDG process, while the principle of accountability underlines the rights of populations to monitor the progress of governments towards meeting the Goals, and to hold them to account where they fail. Given that poor women tend to be excluded twice over – on the grounds of poverty and gender – their involvement in these processes is crucial if all the Goals are to be achieved. Thus, a human rights approach positions poor women as key actors in the development process, rather than as passive recipients of aid. Yet the involvement of poor women – and the involvement of civil society more generally – in the MDG process has been largely peripheral to date. At the national level, the MDGs remain the principal tool for participating in the MDG process and for holding governments to account. It is therefore essential that they are made accessible to everyone, including the poorest and most marginalised people, and that these people are empowered to participate meaningfully in the reporting and monitoring process.

More and better access to information and data concerning the Goals would, of course, not, by itself, achieve women's empowerment. The Goals must also seek to address the nature of gender relations and the environment in which women exercise their agency. This means tackling the inequality and the denial of rights at all levels, including the macro-economic structures, the political institutions, and the cultural practices and attitudes that sustain forms of discrimination.

Of course, just as we cannot assume that the attainment of the MDGs would inevitably contribute to the promotion of human rights, neither can we suppose that a commitment by governments to apply human rights principles to policy making would necessarily contribute to the

realisation of the MDGs. The ratification of international human rights treaties has not generally resulted in dramatic improvements in the quality of the lives of citizens. The gap between the rhetoric of human rights and the reality of failure to uphold them is particularly marked in the case of women's rights. For human rights principles to be truly effective, action is required on a number of different levels. In the context of the struggle for gender equality, it means incorporating international human rights norms, set out in instruments such as CEDAW, into national constitutions and laws. It also means investing in national equality commissions and human rights bodies, education and outreach programmes for both women and men, and developing and providing access to fair arbitration systems at the local level. This costs money, and, in the context of the MDGs, there needs to be far greater emphasis on financing these systems of implementation, to render the Goals effective. There also needs to be a broader discussion about the meaning and practical implications of a rights-based approach to the MDG process among governments, civil society, the private sector, and international financial institutions.

The MDGs through a CEDAW lens

This section focuses on how the standards and principles set out in CEDAW can be used to strengthen existing approaches to the MDGs and reinforce the processes for achieving the Goals.

A number of arguments have already been made which support the rationale for adopting a more gender-sensitive approach to the MDGs, but these primarily advance an 'instrumentalist' logic that seeks to convince the economists of the *effectiveness* of mainstreaming gender. That is, they are based on the rationale that attempting to achieve the MDGs without promoting

gender equality and women's rights will both raise the costs and decrease the likelihood of achieving the Goals (Carlsson and Valdivieso 2003).

Looking at the MDGs through a CEDAW lens adds another dimension to these arguments. The Convention rests on the conviction that all women have human *rights*, not just *needs*. Seen in this light, the ideals of equality and non-discrimination are, in fact, important ends in themselves, not simply means of delivering the MDGs in a cost-effective way. CEDAW also identifies the factors that give rise to inequality, thus preventing the realisation of the MDGs, and highlights some of the solutions required to address them.

The Convention covers a range of areas relevant to the MDGs, such as education, employment, and maternal mortality, but there are also gaps. The General Recommendations and Concluding Comments of the CEDAW Committee help to close some of these gaps, providing as they do more detailed guidance for tackling barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, both the official reporting process and the shadow reporting process that monitor states' compliance with the Convention offer opportunities for dialogue between states, the CEDAW Committee, and NGOs, which can be used to explore and strengthen the links between women's human rights and specific Goals.

Since the scope of this article precludes an analysis of all of the MDGs through a CEDAW lens, the next section examines just two of the MDGs: Goal 1 and Goal 3. They are closely interrelated, and the pathways for achieving them intersect and complement each other. The analysis aims to highlight some of the specific interventions and policy choices that would be required for a CEDAW-compliant approach to these particular Goals.

Meeting Goal 1

The targets for Goal 1 include halving the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1 a day, and halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015. Yet low income and hunger are just two manifestations of this complex phenomenon, which includes lack of clothing and lack of access to education, health care, and social services. Goal 1 also fails to take into account the gender dimensions of poverty and the different ways in which economic poverty affects women's and men's lives.

The consequences of this approach can be seen in a sample of MDG Reports that were analysed for the UNDP. Just two out of 13 national reports (those of Mozambique and Viet Nam) include gender analyses of the causes and impact of women's poverty, and only one report (Bolivia) makes a connection between the concerns of reducing poverty, increasing opportunities for women, and ensuring their human rights (Menon-Sen 2003, 8).

What CEDAW says

While there is no provision in the Convention that addresses poverty specifically, CEDAW identifies gender-specific obstacles to the equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms, all of which are relevant, in one way or another, to eliminating women's poverty; for example, discriminatory cultural patterns and customary practices (Article 5), women's exclusion from political decision-making (Articles 7 and 8), and discrimination in the fields of education (Article 10), health (Article 12), property ownership (Article 15), and in marriage and family matters (Article 16). The language of Article 14, which addresses the problems faced by rural women, is particularly sensitive to women's vulnerability to poverty.

The CEDAW preamble highlights women's particular vulnerability to violations of their human rights in situations of poverty. Its reaffirmation of the indivisibility

of rights underlines the importance of holistic, multi-dimensional approaches to tackling the goal of poverty reduction, since women without adequate economic resources are unlikely to be able to enjoy their other rights, such as control over resources such as housing and food.

Equally, women without freedom of expression are unlikely to be able to fight for their most basic needs. By positioning women as people with their own rights, rather than as dependants of male relatives, CEDAW demands that attention should be paid to the processes that allow women to claim their rights. Thus, women should have the right to participate in the design of strategies to eradicate poverty on equal terms with men.

The two layers of discrimination against women – discrimination contained in laws and discrimination stemming from procedures, policies, or practice – that the Convention identifies are also helpful, in that they illustrate the different types of strategy required to reach Goal 1. For instance, inheritance rights that provide only for sons are an example of *de jure* discrimination that can plunge women even further into poverty, unless suitable legal reforms are carried out. The unequal workload and responsibilities of many rural women are examples of *de facto* discrimination, which need to be addressed by awareness-raising and a change of attitudes.

A more detailed analysis of the provisions set out in CEDAW and the CEDAW Committee's various instruments highlights a number of ways in which the implementation of the MDGs can be strengthened. These translate into three strategic action points, and a series of practical steps. The latter can act as a checklist for national-level activities to ensure that measures undertaken to meet Goal 1 of the MDGs advance gender equality and women's human rights. The strategic action points are addressed in the three sections that follow.

Table 1: *Relevant CEDAW provisions*

Article 5	Modification of social and cultural patterns that promote stereotypes
Article 10c	Elimination of stereotyped concepts at all levels of education, including textbooks, teaching methods
Article 11:1e	Right to social security
Article 11:2c	Provision of social services
Article 13a	Right to family benefits
Article 14:2c	Right of rural women to benefit from social security programmes
Article 14:2h	Right to enjoy adequate living conditions
General Recommendation 16	Unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises
General Recommendation 23, paragraphs 12 and 17	Discriminatory laws and customs that prevent women from having equal access to resources; that accord husband the status of head of household and primary decision maker

1 To ensure that national development strategies strengthen the substantive rights of poor women and do not discriminate against them

CEDAW cautions against the kind of stereotyping that depicts women as mothers and wives only, and results in analysis in which they appear only in relation to issues such as children and health. It calls for their full and equal participation in public life. Therefore, any strategy to achieve Goal 1 must take into consideration the views and priorities of women and should militate against restricting interventions to the areas of education and health, to the exclusion of other areas such as employment, social positioning, and violence against women. Moreover, it is no defence to say that the prevailing culture of a country portrays women as the dependants of men, since CEDAW calls on all states to modify social and cultural patterns that promote stereotypes.

The CEDAW approach also rules out pursuing strategies for reducing income-poverty if these violate women's human rights. For instance, while the growth of textile and garment factories in countries such as Indonesia has allowed some women to gain an advantage in terms of income, this

expansion of so-called 'women's jobs' has disproportionately sidelined women in temporary work with few workers' rights. In some situations, women are reported to have been subjected to sexual harassment, coerced into working overtime, and punished when they work slowly (Global Alliance for Workers and Communities 2001)

Projects such as UNIFEM's DESafios in Latin America, which takes a rights-based approach to women's economic and social rights, offer a practical illustration of how women's role in development can be strengthened by building their capacity to monitor the allocation of resources for the fulfilment of government commitments, promoting their political participation in economic decisions and supporting women's organisations and trade unions (UNIFEM 2003, 28).

MDG strategies should therefore:

- ensure that national-level targets and strategies are set/revised in consultation with women living in poverty and/or with the NGOs that represent them;
- ensure that strategies to meet all the MDGs measure the impact and improvements for poor women and

devise sub-targets that take into consideration the most marginalised groups of poor women, such as widows, and rural and disabled women;

- describe the types of policy formulation in which women have participated and the level and extent of their participation;
- provide for education and training to ensure that women are fully informed of the MDG process.

2 To reform laws and policies to secure women's equal access to economic resources

One of the biggest constraints preventing women from accessing employment and income is their unequal access to capital, resources – particularly land and credit – and labour markets. This has a direct impact on their ability to provide security against hunger and poverty. Women's equality in accessing employment and income is directly linked to their empowerment and their ability to participate fully in the economic and social lives of their country. This illustrates clearly how progress towards Goal 1 is dependent on progress towards Goal 3, and vice versa.

CEDAW emphasises the legal steps required to secure women's equal access to

economic resources. For instance, on the question of women's land rights, CEDAW draws attention to the legal *process* through which land reform is secured and the need to remove barriers that restrict women's legal capacity in any way (CEDAW 1979, Article 15). Strategies to meet Goal 1 must therefore incorporate measures to strengthen women's legal aid and to reform the justice system, if women are to claim their equal property rights.

An initiative between civil society organisations and regional government officials in the Western Cape region of South Africa used CEDAW as a baseline for measuring the extent of the exclusion of rural women farm workers from economic opportunities. This enabled participants to identify the gender issues that compounded women's experience of poverty. This work contributed to the development of gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring the progress of rural women in other regions (International Center for Research on Women 2002).

MDG strategies should:

- improve legal aid and education for women seeking redress on poverty issues;

Table 2: Relevant CEDAW provisions

Article 2c	Establish legal protection of rights of women on equal basis with men
Article 11:1b	Same employment opportunities as men
Article 11:1d	Equal pay for equal work
Article 13b	Right to bank loans, mortgages, and other forms of financial credit
Article 14:2g	Access to agricultural credit and loans
Article 15:2	Equal rights to conclude contracts and administer property
Article 16:1h	Equal rights to ownership of property
General Recommendation 13	Equal remuneration for work of equal value
General Recommendation 17	Measurement and quantification of unremunerated domestic activities of women and their recognition in the GNP
General Recommendation 21	Equality in marriage and family relations

- include steps to reform the justice system and make it more accessible to women;
- measure compliance with CEDAW on women's access to economic assets;
- measure reductions in gender disparities in access to, and control over, economic resources, including the right to inheritance and land ownership;
- ensure that women have access to financial services, improve availability of credit, and support innovative lending practices;
- support self-help initiatives of poor women, such as co-operatives, that seek to develop work opportunities in their communities.

3 To improve measurement and monitoring of women's poverty and their access to information

General Recommendation 9 of the CEDAW Committee points to the need for reliable data disaggregated by sex in order to understand 'the real situation for women' (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women 1990). In a number of its Concluding Comments (the remarks and recommendations made by the Committee at the end of the reporting process), it has also urged states to assess the gender impact of anti-poverty measures (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women 2003, paragraph 34).

Access to data and other information is critical if women are to be given the opportunity to make informed choices about their lives, to challenge the status quo, and to hold governments and individuals accountable. However, apart from some notable exceptions,² there is currently a huge gap in the quality and quantity of data available for monitoring the extent of women's poverty. The lack of information available to poor women about poverty-reduction strategies, and their rights more generally, also constitutes a form of discrimination. This must be addressed urgently if Goal 1 is to be met.

MDG strategies should:

- conduct assessments of their impact, disaggregated by sex, with a view to eliminating discriminatory practices that affect women's economic and other interests;
- improve the availability and quality of sex-disaggregated poverty data on, for instance, minimum wage levels and equal pay for equal work requirements, in order to stabilise women's income levels above the poverty line;
- ensure that strategies to achieve Goal 1 include various awareness-raising initiatives, such as skills-training workshops and media information campaigns.

Table 3: Relevant CEDAW provisions

Article 10h	Access to educational information to ensure health and well-being of families
Article 14:2b	Access to adequate health-care facilities, including information
General Recommendation 9	Statistical data concerning the situation of women
General Recommendation 17	Measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic activities of women and their recognition in the GNP
General Recommendation 24, paragraph 9	States must report on their legislation, plans, and policies for women with reliable data disaggregated by sex

Meeting Goal 3

If Goal 3 is examined from the point of view of women's human rights as enshrined in CEDAW, it is clear (as pointed out in detail in other articles in this collection) that the target of eliminating gender disparity in access to education is far from adequate to address the scope of inequality women face. The Convention recommends a holistic approach to tackling discrimination, including the need to ensure equal opportunities for women and men. It places equal emphasis on the importance of targeting culture and tradition and sexual harassment and stereotyping, underlining the fact that women's empowerment and the achievement of gender equality are not just goals but *processes*.

The next section examines and provides recommendations for two areas that have received little attention to date in the MDGRs – gender equality in the labour market and violence against women – but which are, according to CEDAW, equally critical to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender equality in the labour market: what CEDAW says

One of the indicators for achieving Goal 3 is women's share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. This can be used to measure progress in women's economic opportunity, but it has its drawbacks. For instance, it may fail to distinguish between different types of work or to indicate how women's increased share of wage employment adds to their total workload (Grown *et al.* 2003).

CEDAW encourages an emphasis not only on women's right to work, but on the *quality* of their working conditions. Examples are their right to maternity leave, to the protection of their health and safety at work, and to the same pay and benefits of work as men. National indicators for Goal 3 could therefore be strengthened by including qualitative measures that are linked to concrete steps to improve the quality of women's working conditions. This might require putting temporary special measures in place, until more long-term measures can be taken.

Table 4: Relevant CEDAW provisions

Article 11	Take measures to eliminate discrimination in employment, including equal pay for work of equal value, right to social security, maternity leave
Article 13	Eliminate discrimination in areas of economic and social life
Article 14:2e	Right of rural women to organise to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment
Article 16:1g	Same rights as husband to choose a profession and occupation
General Recommendation 5	Temporary special measures to advance women's integration into education, the economy, politics, and employment
General Recommendation 13	Equal remuneration for work of equal value
General Recommendation 16	Unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises
General Recommendation 17	Measurement and quantification of unremunerated domestic activities of women and their recognition in the GNP
General Recommendation 19, paragraphs 18 and 24j	Sexual harassment in the workplace constitutes a health and safety issue
General Recommendation 21, paragraphs 24, 41, and 42	Equal rights of husband and wife to choose employment and need to modify stereotypes that prevent women from choosing their profession

The CEDAW Committee has drawn particular attention to the situation of particular groups of women, such as migrant workers, who are often forced into unsafe working environments if they lack proper legal status. A UNIFEM project that teaches migrant workers about their rights and advises government agencies on how to handle migrant labour demonstrates how a rights-based approach can empower women to improve their legal, social, and economic situation and can strengthen the accountability mechanisms that support them (UNIFEM 2003).

Since CEDAW prohibits stereotyping, any strategy to tackle the MDGs ought to include steps to sensitise and educate women and men and counter stereotypes that prevent women from choosing their profession, thus promoting the presence of women in many different types of careers and providing for equal labour division in the household.

MDG strategies should:

- ensure that strategies to implement Goal 3 include measures of gender equality in the labour market that reflect women's economic realities, both in the public and private sectors;
- develop sensitisation programmes for women and men to counter negative stereotypes and ensure equal opportunities in the labour market and equal division of labour in the household;
- devise sub-targets that take into consideration marginalised groups of women;

- consider temporary special measures, such as positive action, to address women's under-representation in certain areas of work and to safeguard their health and safety.

Violence against women: what CEDAW says

Although CEDAW does not make specific reference to violence against women, General Recommendation 19 of the CEDAW Committee states that the definition of discrimination includes violence against women. Violence acts as a barrier to women's empowerment and negatively affects their health, education, and employment. This has obvious implications for the MDGs. Violence against women threatens to undermine fulfilment of all the Goals. For example, women's lack of ability to negotiate the conditions in which sex takes place, free from the fear of violence, increases their vulnerability to HIV infection (relevant to Goals 3, 5, and 6). HIV infection, in turn, can compound women's poverty, as they may lose their jobs through illness or have to pay medical expenses (relevant to Goal 1).

The CEDAW Committee has underlined, in its Concluding Comments to various countries, the importance of assessing the extent and prevalence of all forms of violence against women and of introducing measures to combat the problem. Specifically, it has recommended legislation, plus comprehensive gender awareness-raising and education. It recommends the latter not only for the public in general, but

Table 5: Relevant CEDAW provisions

Article 6	Suppress all forms of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution of women
Article 11	Eliminate discrimination in employment: General Recommendation 19 recognises sexual harassment as a threat to health and safety in the workplace
Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women	Violence against women
General Recommendation 19	Violence against women

for law-enforcement agencies (such as judges, lawyers, and police officers) in particular. It also recommends the provision of shelters for women who are fleeing violence. WOMANKIND Worldwide's Nkyinkyim programme in Ghana has adopted this kind of holistic approach to tackling the problem of domestic violence, and this has proved very effective.³

The CEDAW Committee also holds states liable for the rights violations committed by private individuals. However, since CEDAW does not always have the same binding force as domestic law, it is important that national accountability mechanisms and community interventions are reinforced. For example, in India, the National Commission on Women has used CEDAW to draw up guidelines and norms regarding sexual harassment that have been widely circulated to government departments and is undertaking an ongoing assessment of their implementation (International Center for Research on Women 2002).

Strategies to meet Goal 3 can be strengthened at the national level by the inclusion of an indicator to monitor the prevalence of violence against women – Viet Nam has already done this – but they could also include targets for improving national and/or local mechanisms to tackle the problem.

MDG strategies should:

- adopt specific indicators to measure the quantity and quality of programmes aimed at addressing violence against women and changing social norms that tolerate violence against women;
- support the reform and full implementation of laws against family violence and abuse, rape, and sexual assault;
- harmonise strategies to eradicate poverty with strategies to tackle violence;
- promote national-level media campaigns to promote respect for women.

Conclusion: action to pursue in 2005

The MDGs are here to stay. It is crucial for women's rights activists to use all the available tools and opportunities. Hence, we need to promote better integration of a gender equality and women's human rights perspective in the MDG processes.

An important step in this process is to articulate, build, and strengthen both the conceptual and practical linkages between the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and MDGs, and to ensure that this knowledge is used to inform the 2005 review processes. In practical terms, this involves articulating and measuring the gender dimensions of each of the Goals, and ensuring, as a minimum requirement, that targets and indicators are compliant with CEDAW and other instruments, such as the Beijing Platform for Action, both at the international level and, more importantly, at the national level, using national MDGRs. It also involves integrating CEDAW reports, National Plans of Action for women, MDG country reports, and other existing development plans, as well as raising awareness and supporting the efforts of activists seeking to build bridges between these different areas.

This article has highlighted just a few of the practical ways in which human rights principles, and CEDAW in particular, can guide national-level monitoring and the processes required to meet the MDGs in a way that tackles the root causes of inequality and discrimination against women. This is something that existing approaches are failing to do. CEDAW does not have all the answers, but implementing these basic provisions would go a long way towards ensuring that the MDGs are also met.

Ceri Hayes is Policy Manager at WOMANKIND Worldwide. WOMANKIND Worldwide is a UK-based international women's human rights and development organisation, established in 1989,

which works with partner organisations around the world to achieve lasting improvement in women's economic, social, and political position. Contact: ceri@womankind.org.uk; WOMANKIND Worldwide, Development House, 56–64 Leonard Street, London, EC2A 4JX, UK.

Notes

- 1 This article is a synthesis of a longer paper originally written in September 2003. It has subsequently been printed by WOMANKIND Worldwide and is available from ceri@womankind.org.uk. With thanks to Professor Diane Elson for the helpful discussions and guidance in researching the original paper.
- 2 For example, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has developed a set of gender-sensitive indicators that have been used to measure the extent of women's poverty for the whole region.
- 3 See www.womankind.org.uk/four%20literacies/bodylit/wafrica.html for further information about WOMANKIND Worldwide's Nkyinkyim programme.

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