

# I. Introduction

The *Millennium Declaration* endorsed by the world's governments in September 2000 recognizes that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are among the most effective ways to “combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.”<sup>7</sup> At the World Summit in September 2005, governments reaffirmed their conviction that “progress for women is progress for all.”<sup>8</sup> This paper (a) analyzes the progress of developing countries in Asia and the Pacific toward achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that explicitly promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; (b) examines the gender dimensions of countries' progress toward the other MDGs; and (c) recommends future directions that countries and their development partners can take, individually or regionally, to make more consistent and sustainable progress in closing gender gaps and empowering women and girls in the region.

The paper is based on a review of data from the Millennium Indicators Database hosted by the United Nations (UN) Statistical Division and trend analysis prepared for the 2005 joint United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Asian Development Bank (ADB) MDG Report: *A Future Within Reach: Reshaping Institutions in a Region of Disparities to Meet the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific*; MDG progress reports and national poverty reduction strategies of countries in the region; recent country gender assessments; and other relevant sources.<sup>9</sup> The paper also draws on the findings and recommendations from recent reports on worldwide trends related to gender equality, women's empowerment and women's health—including reports from the UN Millennium Project<sup>10</sup>—and considers their relevance in the Asian and Pacific context.

**MDG progress reports confirm the interrelationship between the gender-specific MDGs and other MDGs as well as broader strategic development goals.**

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## ENDNOTES

- 7 UN General Assembly. 2000. *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, para. 20. UN Doc. A/RES/55/2. 18 September.
- 8 UN General Assembly. 2005. *2005 World Summit Outcome*, para. 58. UN Doc. A/60/L.1. 18 September.
- 9 Country information cited in the paper is taken generally from the country's latest available progress reports on the MDGs and on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (the outcome document of the Fourth World Conference on Women).
- 10 An independent advisory body commissioned by the UN Secretary General to propose best strategies to achieve the MDGs [Available: <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org>].

