

# VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

Countries in Asia and the Pacific are making progress toward achieving Millennium Development Goal 3—promoting gender equality and empowering women—mainly by narrowing gender gaps in primary and secondary education and raising literacy rates. However, progress in improving women’s economic and political participation under Goal 3 has been more mixed, and most countries are not reducing the number of maternal deaths fast enough under Goal 5. Most countries in the region have put in place sound laws and policies to promote gender equality and protect women’s rights, but implementation and enforcement mechanisms are weak and traditional gender norms and practices persist. The region as a whole faces a number of challenges to the achievement of gender equality, but it is also home to some of the world’s most innovative and successful strategies for narrowing gender gaps and empowering women. These success stories provide possible models for other countries to adapt and follow.

The recent World Summit confirmed the importance of pursuing gender equality and women’s empowerment as a fundamental development goal in its own right, as well as an essential part of any strategy to reduce poverty and hunger, improve access to basic services, prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, and promote sustainable development. Building on the commitments in the *Millennium Declaration*, the *World Summit Outcome* endorses a clear set of actions to promote gender equality over the next 10 years and beyond. These World Summit commitments reflect a more expansive and

multisectoral view of gender equality than the original targets and indicators for Goals 3 and 5, and support the broader view of these Goals that many countries in the region have already taken through their own national development goals, targets and indicators. The World Summit commitments to gender equality provide a sound framework for governments, civil society groups and development agencies to pursue more gender-equitable development outcomes in the region. Specific actions that each of these key stakeholder groups can take are outlined below. However, meaningful progress toward gender equality will not be made without strong political commitment at all levels and changes in prevailing social norms and attitudes.

**Government actions.** To implement their commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment in both the *Millennium Declaration* and *World Summit Outcome*, governments in the region should

- ensure that their national poverty reduction strategies (or national development plans) support the gender equality framework endorsed by the World Summit—including time-bound actions to (1) eliminate gender inequalities at all educational levels; (2) guarantee women’s rights to own and inherit property; (3) ensure equal access to reproductive health services; (4) promote equal access to decent employment; (5) ensure equal access to productive assets and resources including land, credit and technology; (6) eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and

**The 2005 World Summit commitments to gender equality provide a sound framework for governments, civil society groups and development agencies to pursue more gender-equitable outcomes in the region. However, meaningful progress toward gender equality will not be made without strong political commitment at all levels and changes in prevailing social norms and attitudes.**



girls; and (7) increase women's representation in government decision making at all levels;

- estimate the full costs of all activities needed to achieve these gender equality objectives, and include these costs in relevant expenditure frameworks and budgets;
- integrate gender considerations in all strategies and programs aimed to achieve the MDGs, and analyze the related expenditure frameworks and budgets from a gender perspective;
- implement specific strategies—in partnership with civil society groups and other key stakeholders—to improve the capabilities, opportunities, security and voice of adolescent girls and women from marginalized groups, including ethnic minorities, disadvantaged castes, refugees and other displaced persons, migrants and the disabled;
- prioritize “software” activities, including outreach to political and religious leaders, awareness-raising campaigns, and mobilization of women's groups and supportive men's groups, to challenge traditional gender norms and practices (including sex-selective abortions and neglect of infant girls, early marriage, tolerance of domestic violence and inequitable rules relating to inheritance and ownership of land);
- increase funding and political support for key institutions supporting gender equality (including national focal agencies for gender equality, labor inspectorates, and human rights commissions);
- improve the monitoring of gender-related progress under the MDGs by disaggregating all national MDG indicators by sex (as well as age, ethnicity and other relevant factors), and expand the indicators for Goals 3 and 5 to reflect the broader World Summit commitments to gender equality and reproductive health; and

- pursue opportunities to partner with other countries in the region on common objectives, such as regularizing migration; combating human trafficking; preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases; and promoting trade, tourism, and regional infrastructure projects with sensitivity to gender and other social concerns.

**Civil society organizations.** Women’s organizations and other civil society groups can help governments to implement their commitments to gender equality, and hold governments accountable for their performance, by

- ensuring that their own policies and programs support the broad gender equality agenda outlined in the *World Summit Outcome*;
- partnering with national and local governments and with development agencies to implement programs with gender equality objectives, especially activities involving community outreach and mobilization, and programs targeting women in marginalized groups;
- advocating law and policy reforms and more effective institutions to promote gender equality and ensure access to justice, especially for poor and marginalized women; and
- monitoring and reporting on government’s performance related to its gender equality commitments (for example, through shadow reports to the CEDAW expert committee and gender audits or assessments of specific government programs).

**Development agencies.** Bilateral and multilateral agencies also have important roles to play

in supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region by

- aligning their own gender policies and programs with the gender equality framework outlined in the *World Summit Outcome*, and with the national gender policies and action plans of their government partners;
- increasing their funding for gender-related assistance, especially to the weakest-performing countries in the region in terms of gender equality, and for programs targeting women in disadvantaged groups;
- continuing to support national gender focal agencies, and also supporting gender-mainstreaming activities in other key government bodies, including finance, planning and sectoral ministries, national parliaments, and local governments and elected bodies;
- continuing to support women’s organizations and other civil society groups that promote gender equality and women’s rights;
- incorporating a gender perspective in their support for all sectors; and tracking, assessing, and reporting on their own gender-related performance;
- supporting bilateral and regional initiatives to promote gender equality (for example, through south-south technical assistance, peer exchanges and regional networks of gender advocates, experts, and policymakers); and
- incorporating a gender perspective in their regional programs related to migration, human trafficking, control of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, trade, tourism, infrastructure development, and relief and reconstruction following conflicts and natural disasters.

