



Millennium Development Goals

Introduction

With five years left to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), leaders from around the world will be gathering in September 2010 at a special United Nations summit. There, they will undertake a comprehensive review of progress to date and chart a course to accelerate action between now and 2015.

The latest UN report¹ on the MDGs states that progress has been made, but it has been uneven. Without a concerted effort, many Goals will be missed in most regions. The MDGs are still attainable but the advancements of the last decade must speed up dramatically. All the MDGs have some impact on children – six of them directly. Like all those who have been playing their part in meeting the MDGs, Plan has also been playing a critical role, and believes the experiences of the last ten years provide evidence of practical measures that can be taken to help achieve each goal.

Over the last 5 years Plan, through its programmes, practice and policy has focused on putting children at the centre of attainment of the MDGs. Plan has placed particular emphasis globally on three vital areas: registering children; stopping violence in schools and increasing attention to the situation of girls. Without greater attention to these issues, the achievement of the eight goals will not be realised.

Universal birth registration has important implications for achieving as well as monitoring the MDGs, in particular reducing child mortality (MDG4), improving maternal health (MDG5) and promoting gender and equality and empowering women (MDG3). In many countries, proof of identity is essential to gaining access to basic services and to exercising their fundamental human rights. Without a birth certificate a child may not be able to sit for school exams, receive immunisations or free health care or claim rights to inheritance or legal protection in courts of law. Proof of age is critical in successfully prosecuting perpetrators of crimes against children such as child trafficking, sexual offences, early recruitment into the armed forces, child marriage and child labour.

The impact of **violence against children in schools** is holding back much of the progress made toward MDGs 2 and 3. They will not be reached unless international organisations, governments, local communities, teachers, parents and children work together to uphold children's right to a violence-free education. Fear of violence stops children from maximising their learning outcomes and often leads to children dropping out of school.

Investing in **girls' rights** has a cascading effect on all other areas of development. Several MDGs are directly at threat through lack of investment in girls, starting with MDG 1. Crucial investments are also needed in access to healthcare to stop more girls dying (MDG 4); to prevent girls from missing out on school because of persistent illness (MDG 6) and to establish pre-school education so that girls and their families become more engaged in their education (MDG 2 and 3).



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In Nepal, Plan has been working with girls in bonded labour to reunite them with their families and communities, and support them with access to quality education and training in life skills.

The Millennium Development Goals

The eight MDGs were formulated on the basis of the Millennium Development Declaration signed by the leaders of 189 nations in December 2000. They are to be achieved by 2015. The eight goals are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV, Malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

For further information
plan-international.org

Therefore Plan calls upon all Governments to:

- Ensure that a child rights approach is central to all programme and funding looking to address the goals of the MDGs – ensuring the right to participation of children, the right to survival, the rights to non-discrimination and that the best interests of the child are paramount in all decisions taken.
- Significantly increase their efforts to achieve Universal Birth Registration by incorporating birth registration into their own policies and practices and ensuring registration is included in partnerships and agreements with others.
- Significantly increase efforts at registering children by decentralising registration, or by raising awareness and waiving fees without discrimination.
- Ensure that birth registration becomes a national priority and be integrated into national development plans of action or poverty reduction strategies.
- Outlaw all forms of violence against children in schools, including corporal punishment, gender-based and sexual violence, bullying, neglect and degrading punishment. New laws must be consistent with Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards and be rigorously enforced.
- Include within education budgets provision for proven interventions such as reducing class sizes, professionalising the teaching profession, increased teacher training, peer education, psychosocial, welfare and health support mechanisms.
- Significantly increase investments and efforts in quality girls' education, from early childcare through to secondary education, to ensure girls gain assets and life skills necessary to have an improved chance in life.

Plan is one of the oldest and largest international non-governmental development organisations in the world, operating in 66 countries. Plan takes the obligations provided by international human rights instruments, primarily the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as its principal external guidance for programme work and campaigns. Its rights-based child-centred community development (CCCD) approach to programming ensures that children, families and communities are active and leading participants in their own development. It enhances their capacity and opportunity to work together with others in order to address structural causes and consequences of child poverty at all levels.

There were serious attempts to take stock of the MDGs in 2005. The forecasts were mixed; it was clear that despite unprecedented prosperity and growth in many regions the targets would be missed in many individual countries. Like other organisations Plan considered how its experience and strengths could contribute to the 2015 targets. On assessment, Plan realised that there was a match between challenges to achieving the Goals and many of Plan's strengths e.g. implementation at local level; attention to quality and not just quantity; a concern with growing inequalities often masked by aggregate statistics. Plan also had relationships in many countries with governments, corporations and multilateral bodies – vital to addressing the challenges.

Therefore, since 2005 Plan has been developing and running global campaigns – a concerted effort focused on areas that would directly contribute to achieving the MDGs:

- *Universal Birth Registration*
- *Learn Without Fear: The global campaign to end violence in schools*
- *Because I am a Girl: Plan's campaign to fight gender inequality, promote girl's rights and lift millions of girls out of poverty.*

Child rights, child protection and the MDGs

With Plan's rights-based approach based on the UN CRC, which we call child-centred community development (CCCD), we see our role as a facilitator of the relationship between children and youth (rights-holders) and those holding responsibility for the realisation of child rights (principally the State, but also parents and communities). The Goals primarily describe totals and averages which are accounted for against sixty indicators, but applying a child-rights lens deepens the focus and goes beyond averages to ask which children are included, which are excluded and why.

The 1980s and 1990s were seen as the 'lost decades' in terms of reducing global poverty. The re-launch of the MDGs in September 2000 was intended to appeal to public opinion to change global priorities. They were linked to the Millennium Declaration, which derives from universal values including freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. The 189 governments which adopted the Declaration on behalf of their citizens, aimed to 'free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected'. The Declaration committed nations 'to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want'. The UN Secretary General's Road Map² towards the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration stated that human rights should be at the centre of peace, security and development programmes.

Although all eight MDGs can be linked to the provisions of various human rights instruments, there has been a genuine concern that a commitment to the MDGs would absorb too much of the time, energy and resources which need to be devoted to human rights campaigns – particularly those focused on women's rights and children's rights. Plan examines the MDGs from the human rights perspective. While acknowledging the limitations of the MDGs – their acceptance of half measures, (halving poverty, instead of eliminating it) their narrowness, one-size-fits-all prescription, technocratic approach, their neglect of important issues – Plan accepts that the MDGs can be a useful tool in mobilising all stakeholders towards the eradication of poverty, which is a major obstacle in achieving human rights, not only in developing countries but also in richer ones.

Therefore, the MDGs must be seen as a part of a broader human rights strategy; human rights are instrumental in ensuring empowerment, access to social services, equality before the law, and are therefore essential in achieving poverty reduction. At the same time, overcoming poverty is a means to securing civil and political rights, economic and social rights, and human security.³ There are a number of human rights concepts: shared responsibility, indivisibility, non-discrimination, equality, and accountability without which the MDGs cannot be achieved.

For Plan, looking at the MDGs through the child rights lens has meant a particular emphasis on accountability and participation. The process is essentially of identifying and monitoring the duty bearers and empowering the rights holders – which would not be possible if a minimum level of civil and political rights did not already exist. Plan has consistently argued that children's participation leads to better outcomes and policies; involving children teaches them skills and attitudes which lead to an improved society in the short and longer

Child-centred community development:

- is a rights-based approach
- involves children, families and communities
- stakeholders are active and leading participants in their own development
- it enhances their capacity and opportunity to work together with others
- it aims to address the causes and consequences of child poverty.

term. Significantly, in this year of assessment, when we ask why some countries are more on track than others, the answers include greater accountability and transparency at all levels, more citizen engagement, and more public debate.⁴

Unlike the Women's Convention (CEDAW) and other human rights treaties, the CRC lacks any method by which children can petition the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, when governments have violated their rights. To improve the protection of the rights of children throughout the world, the UN CRC needs a complaints procedure by which an individual child or groups of children, or adults representing them, can seek a remedy where children's rights have been violated by a state and that state has failed to remedy the situation. In this way the complaints procedure would become an international safety net for children. A successful complaint against one state would not only benefit children living in that state but would set the standard which all other states would have to meet to avoid litigation being brought against them.

A complaints mechanism would benefit both boys and girls. It would, however, be of considerable benefit to girls as it would increase the global community's awareness of the violations of the rights of girls. It would also send out a clear and resounding signal that girls as well as boys are full beneficiaries of all the rights of the child – civil, political, economic, social and cultural in peace and in times of armed conflict.

Call to Action:

To ensure that a child rights approach is central to all programmes and funding looking to address the goals of the MDG – through ensuring the right to participation of children, the right to survival, the rights to non-discrimination and that the best interests of the child are paramount in all decisions taken.

MDGs and the equity agenda

There is a strong link between economic growth and poverty reduction. High rates of growth in China and India, among other countries, have resulted in considerable reductions in global income poverty, and measurable progress towards meeting MDG 1. It has become increasingly clear over the last decade, however, that averages conceal disparities in the way that the opportunities presented by growth, and the benefits of growth, are distributed in a society. Many have long been aware that the right to non-discrimination was essential to achieving the MDGs. There is now a growing consensus that unless specifically addressed, discrimination will prevent the achievement of the MDGs for many groups of people. Actions will have to eliminate inequalities between rich and poor, between those living in rural or remote areas versus those in better-off urban areas and those discriminated against due to gender, age, disability or ethnicity.⁵

Plan, together with other children's rights organisations^{6,7} is now arguing more strongly that the principles of non-discrimination and equality must underpin MDG processes to ensure that national MDG agendas reflect the concerns of girls and women, people with disabilities, racial minorities and other marginalised groups and vulnerable children.

Universal Birth Registration and the MDGs

a) Why Universal Birth Registration is essential to achieving the MDGs

Registering a birth is a critical first step in ensuring the rights of a child. Registration means proof – not only of identity, but of existence. A birth certificate is confirmation of a child's nationality, place of birth, parentage and age. In many countries it is seen as the key identity document, outweighing any other – a birth certificate is often needed to apply for a passport, driving license or national identity card, as the child becomes an adult.

Registration entitles a child to their rights and bestows the responsibility for that child, throughout his or her life, on the state in which they are born. In many countries, proof of identity is essential to gaining access to basic services and to exercising their fundamental human rights. Without a birth certificate a child may not be able to sit for school exams, receive immunisations or free health care or claim rights to inheritance or legal protection in courts of law. Proof of age is critical in successfully prosecuting perpetrators of crimes against children such as child trafficking, sexual offences, early recruitment into the armed forces, child marriage and child labour. Birth registration supports the implementation of national policies as well as legislation regulating the minimum age for child labour, child recruitment and child marriage, and it is a valuable basis for tracing efforts when children are separated from their parents during disasters, conflict or emergencies.

As an adult without a birth certificate, a person may not have the right to marry, vote, be employed in the formal sector (for example, to work legally or pay taxes), access credit and loans from banks, or even to register their own children's births. Birth registration is not just about child rights, it is also essential for compiling vital statistics that countries need to plan, develop and implement social policies and services, including health and education.⁸ Registration provides demographic data that allows a country to keep track of the condition of its population, including vital informa-

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tion about the situation of children. Disaggregated population data can help identify geographic, social, gender and economic disparities within national boundaries.⁹ The use of this data can lead to more accurate planning and implementation of development policies and programmes and greater success in targeting development funding. Such statistics are also essential in monitoring progress towards the MDGs.

Yet despite the legal obligations on states, 51 million children a year are still not registered at birth.¹⁰ In addition, only 57 out of the 192 World Health Organization (WHO) member states had registration systems that reported on births and deaths for at least 90 per cent of the population.¹¹ This has had important implications for monitoring the MDGs, in particular reducing child mortality (MDG4), improving maternal health (MDG5) and promoting gender and equality and empowering women (MDG3).

By 2005, Plan had several years of experience in birth registration and, convinced that the achievement of all the MDGs was dependent on reliable population data, embarked on a global campaign to extend birth registration to all children.

b) Plan's campaign on Universal Birth Registration

Plan formally launched its *Universal Birth Registration* campaign in February 2005 and the campaign has had a major impact on birth registration rates worldwide; it had one simple aim – for every child to have a birth certificate. Over 40 million people in 32 countries have now been registered through the direct efforts of Plan and partners – the majority of them children. Thirty per cent of countries targeted have changed their legal systems as a result of Plan's advocacy work, resulting in free birth certificates and registration for more than 153 million children, born between 2005 and 2009. As Plan's birth registration efforts actually began in 1998 these figures are a conservative estimate of what has been achieved. Where laws have been changed to assist or ensure registration, the positive impact of Plan's work will continue for years to come.

During the campaign Plan successfully highlighted the importance of birth registration to dozens of governments and showed how registration benefits the state and society as well as being the right of every child. Plan helped to improve the understanding of the importance of birth registration to children, parents and communities so that demand for certificates grew significantly and increasing numbers of people were registered. Plan created innovative pilot schemes for maximum outreach to people run training to improve systems and increase capacity. Plan has enabled coalitions of government ministries and organisations from local to national level to work together to improve registration in many countries.

Plan's programming evolved to meet the unique challenges and barriers to registration. Relying on the ingenuity and determination of staff and partners, Plan introduced and developed innovative techniques such as using existing mobile phone networks in Kenya; satellite kits, mobile phones and internet access to record and store data in remote areas in Peru. In Malawi the message was spread at football matches; in Burkina Faso, films were shown at Africa's largest film festival; ten West African countries broadcast special radio programmes made by children. In Tanzania old and new practice came together as traditional village registers were optically scanned to update the population figures. In Indonesia, children were educated and supported to become advocates for birth registration. These children are now spokespeople in schools and on radio shows. Leaders of churches and mosques were told about the importance of registration and they become advocates for Plan's campaign, spreading the message to their congregations.

“Without these fundamental health data, we are working in the dark. We may also be shooting in the dark. Without these data, we have no reliable way of knowing whether interventions are working, and whether development aid is producing the desired health outcomes.”

**Dr Margaret Chan,
Director-General WHO,
12 November 2007**

In five years, Plan's UBR campaign registered over 40 million people and helped to change laws to enable a further 153 million children to register.

Partnerships, where many stakeholders were involved, were important for gaining widespread support for Plan's innovations. Plan persuaded governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations, local groups and leaders and corporate partners to engage in the issue and help in the push towards universal registration.

Plan's campaign achieved dramatic changes:

- One area in Indonesia saw registration rates soar from only 3 per cent to 72 per cent in two years.
- In Cambodia, around seven million people (56 per cent of the population) picked up their birth certificates in just ten months.

Call to Action:

Universal Birth Registration remains Plan's aspiration. But this is something that will not be achieved in just five years of campaigning. However, the campaign has shown how it can be done with the right level of political will and resources.

Therefore Plan urges all actors to work together:

- To significantly increase their efforts to achieve Universal Birth Registration by incorporating birth registration into their own policies and practices and ensuring registration is included in partnerships and agreements with others.
- To significantly increase efforts at registering children by decentralising registration and waiving fees without discrimination.
- To ensure that birth registration becomes a national priority and be integrated into national development plans of action or poverty reduction strategies.
- To fund and implement awareness-raising campaigns that encourage parents to register their children and to ensure the participation of children in awareness-raising.
- To support and fund birth registration systems through the provision of essential supplies for registration, such as computer systems and birth certificates.
- To support and fund training service providers, particularly at community level as well as integrated central databases to ensure adequate recording, transmission, backup and safe keeping of data, as well as to protect the privacy of this information.

Key strategies to increase registration

- **Generating increased political will by persuading and supporting duty – bearers to change laws** – in Bangladesh, after persistent lobbying, the government passed the Birth Registration Act 2004 which allowed registration to be free when it came into force in 2006.
- **Training the community to increase capacity and infrastructure at local level** – in Zambia, the community now approaches midwives and birth attendants to register newborns, and learn about child rights.
- **Increasing understanding about the value of identity documents among diverse populations** – in Cameroon, hundreds of marginalised Baka people became registered citizens for the first time and in Dhaka, Bangladesh, more than 20,000 street children signed up for their birth certificates.
- **Challenging defunct technology, outdated administrative systems and social norms** – in Indonesia, Plan was actively involved in a legal review that put an end to colonial laws that discriminated against children born of minority groups. In one area of Brazil, where one-third of families are headed by women, mothers could not ask for child support unless the child's father was named on the birth certificate. Plan worked with partners between 2007 and 2009, setting up centres where men could confirm their paternity, quickly and without charge. As a result, state law for the recognition of paternity was modified and fees for paternity registration lifted.
- **Creating mobile registration projects to reach out to the population** – in Mozambique, Plan's mobile units cut the distance travelled in order to register from up to 75km to just 1km in many instances.
- **Persuading governments to decentralise registration.** In Sierra Leone, health workers have been mandated to issue birth certificates in order to overcome this.

3. Stopping violence in schools and the MDGs

a) Why stopping violence in schools is essential to achieving the MDGs

Achieving universal primary education is the second MDG; it acknowledges the critical role education plays in eliminating poverty and giving children the chance to improve their lives. Major advances have been made since 2000 and billions of dollars have been spent but these billions are pointless if children are too scared to go to school.

Violence and abuse are endemic in schools in many countries, and are major factors in preventing children from receiving an education.¹² The violence may be corporal punishment, sexual abuse, neglect, verbal and emotional abuse, bullying, peer-to-peer violence, youth gangs, weapons or harassment on the journey to and from school. Each year, 150 million girls and 73 million boys across the world are subjected to sexual violence and 20 to 65 per cent of school children report being verbally or physically bullied.¹³ At present, 89 countries have not yet prohibited corporal punishment in schools.¹⁴ Stopping school violence requires a paradigm shift in behaviour and attitudes at all levels and the commitment of individuals, governments and international agencies.

Research commissioned by Plan in 2008 showed that violence in schools significantly affected attendance by increasing truancy and drop out. In Nepal, for example, one study showed that 14% of school drop outs was attributed to 'fear of teachers'; in other countries, violence in school has led to missed school days due to hospitalisation and health problems. For example, corporal punishment research with 1,500 children in 41 schools in India highlighted the need for urgent action. The study directly linked violence in schools to high drop-out rates, damaged self esteem and personality problems in pupils. In Africa, a number of studies stress that fear or experience of sexual violence in schools is a major reason why some girls under-perform at school or drop out altogether.

Therefore, Plan believes that tackling violence in schools is essential to achieving the goals of universal primary education and Education for All.

b) Plan's Learn Without Fear campaign

Plan's *Learn Without Fear* campaign was set up to address the fact that cruel and humiliating forms of physical punishment, gender-based violence and bullying are a daily rights violation for millions of children. An internal survey carried out in 2007 across the countries in which Plan works revealed that sexual violence, corporal punishment and bullying were the greatest school violence issues for the children we worked with. The campaign was devised around the articles of the CRC, the aims of the MDGs and built on the impetus created by the United Nations study on violence against children (UNVAC) in 2006. It was Plan taking responsibility for one area of violence against children and built on Plan's expertise and years of experience in quality education, school improvement and child protection work. Plan's child-centred community development approach proved essential to the implementation of the campaign.

Plan's Learn Without Fear campaign is an important step towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals. I believe that there is hope – we can end violence in schools. With global solidarity and by synergising our efforts, we really can make a difference for millions of children all over the world.

**Salil Shetty, Director,
United Nations Millennium
Campaign**

The Campaign Goals

1. Improving Laws

Despite universal declarations and public statements emphasising how critical it is to stop violence against children, only a fraction of countries have national laws able to prevent school violence from occurring or to prosecute perpetrators of violence. Following a legal audit published by Plan and ODI in 2008,¹⁵ *Learn Without Fear* campaigners decided that improving laws was a critical step in preventing violence in schools.

2. Goal 2 – Recognising the scale and severity and ensuring appropriate care

Through the campaign, Plan has been able to talk to governments about violence against children in schools, making specific demands and suggestions for prevention. This type of work means that Plan is having a positive impact beyond the communities we work in – for example, during its first year, senior government officials in 30 countries invited Plan to help them stop school violence.

3. Goal 3 – Respecting and promoting the right to a violence-free school

Plan has worked closely with the education sector to tackle violence in school settings by creating and supporting the implementation of model policies and guidelines to improve the school environment. A major strategy has been to help devise or enforce codes of conduct within schools.

Results to date

- Over 398 million children around the world are now better protected by new anti-violence legislation brought about either by Plan's lobbying or by Plan's work on implementing laws that have been passed since the launch of the campaign in 2008.
- 22 countries report a reduction in girls' dropout rates in targeted campaign areas.
- 23 countries report a reduction in boys' dropout rates in targeted campaign areas.
- 20, 000 teachers have been trained in peaceful teaching methods.
- Over half a million children have participated in events which have raised awareness about the issues.
- Over 94 million people were reached with campaign messages to stop violence against children in schools.
- Plan is actively supporting the drafting and development of laws and policies on violence against children in a further 27 countries.

Call to Action:

MDGs 2 and 3 cannot be achieved unless international organisations, governments, local communities, teachers, parents and children work together to uphold children's right to a violence-free education.

Plan calls on all governments:

- To outlaw all forms of violence against children in schools, including corporal punishment, gender-based and sexual violence, bullying, neglect and degrading punishment. New laws must be consistent with Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards and be rigorously enforced.
- To include within education budgets provision for proven interventions such as reducing class sizes, professionalising the teaching profession, increased teacher training, peer education, psychosocial, welfare and health support mechanisms.

4. Because I am a Girl and the MDGs

Progress on the Millennium Development Goals reveals some trends about childhood wellbeing, but major in-country disparities disappear in aggregate statistics. Many factors that are critical for the wellbeing of children are not captured by MDG indicators and references to underlying causes are rare. This is especially the case in terms of differences between boys and girls. While the MDGs highlight some critical gender gaps, especially in education, they do not reveal the power imbalances that are an underlying cause of these disparities. In many countries, boys and girls are valued differently and a preference for sons over daughters is evident not just in the way they are fed, but also in how they are nurtured, clothed, respected and celebrated.

Girls suffer disproportionately from harmful practices such as early marriage and various forms of sexual violence. Globally, more than 65 million women were married or in union before they turned 18. In the countries where literacy among girls is lowest, their chances of early marriage are highest.¹⁶ This deeper subtext of inequality masks evidence of gender discrimination that affects progress on the MDGs. Girls continue to be raised in households where they are expected to shoulder the burden of household labour alongside their mothers.

Girls spend anywhere between 33 and 85 per cent more time on unpaid care work than their brothers.¹⁷ This figure carries legacies for girls far into their adult years. Indeed, one of the crucial targets affecting girls – to reach gender parity in primary school enrolment – should have been met by 2005. Several of the MDGs are directly at threat through lack of investment in girls, starting with MDG 1. Crucial investments are also needed in access to healthcare to stop more girls dying (MDG 4); to prevent girls from missing out on school because of persistent illness (MDG 6) and to establish pre-school education so that girls and their families become more engaged in their education (MDG 2 and 3). The critical moment for girls is now.

a) Why Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign is essential to achieving the MDGs

Plan believes that girls' access to education and legal rights can break the cycle of poverty that girls face around the world. If girls and young women survive the first five years of life, if they can finish school and if they have the chance to take advantage of jobs in the marketplace – they can change their own life chances and those of people around them. The *Because I am a Girl* campaign aims to convince the wider public and world leaders that despite progress gender equality must still be achieved.

There are a number of international laws and agreements that relate to girls and young women, such as the CRC, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Millennium Development Goals themselves. Many of their aims for girls have not been achieved and most are breached on a daily basis. Even where there is national legislation, young women have few opportunities to appeal when their rights are not upheld by the state.

By 2005 it had become very clear that the lack of progress by girls was stopping governments from meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Even in the area of education, where much progress has been made in recent decades, 94 countries had failed to meet the MDG target of having equal numbers of boys and girls in primary and secondary education.

6 out of 8 Millennium Development Goals are in jeopardy:

MDG 1 Eliminate extreme poverty and hunger

Target: Reduce by half the number of people living on less than a dollar a day
The majority of those living on less than \$1 a day are female. Girls and young women are not fulfilling their potential and this is impacting on the world's poorest economies in particular. An extra year of education can boost a girls' eventual wages by between 10 and 20 per cent.

MDG 2 Universal Primary Education

Target: All children will have a full primary schooling by 2015
This target will not be reached unless MDG 3 is met and initiatives that encourage girls to remain in school are implemented.

MDG 3 Promote gender equality and empower women

Target: Ensure gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005
Although there has been some progress towards reaching this goal, the target was not met by 2005.

MDG 4 Reduce infant mortality

Target: Reduce deaths by two-thirds by 2015
Despite girls' natural resilience at birth, more girls than boys die before the age of five in many parts of the world. If action is not taken, MDG 4 will not be met.

MDG 5 Improve maternal health

Target: Reduce by three-quarters by 2015 the maternal mortality rate
Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among young women aged 15 to 19 in the developing world. The younger girls are when they give birth, the higher the risk of complications that could lead to death.

MDG 6 Tackle HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target: Halt by 2015 and reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Young women have less knowledge than young men on HIV infection, yet are more at risk of becoming infected in the first place. Reversing the spread of AIDS is dependent on reducing the infection rates of young women and tackling the gendered behaviour which determines their lack of choice.

Plan's *Because I am a Girl* campaign will aim to transform the lives of millions of the world's poorest girls. Gender inequality is a major obstacle to the achievement of children's rights: overcoming it is therefore central to achieving Plan's mission and vision. Therefore, from 2007 to 2015 Plan is producing a report that looks at different aspects of discrimination against girls. Each report provides a wealth of secondary data and case study material and demonstrates what is being done at local, national and international levels. The campaign will include a cohort study of approximately 140 girls in 9 countries, born in 2006. Plan is following these girls over eight years and reporting on their progress and development.

While statistics now exist in some areas for women and for children, there is very little – except at a micro level – that relates to girls and young women, and statistics are rarely disaggregated by age as well as sex.

Because I am a Girl reports take a rights-based approach to girls' situations at different stages in their lives. They examine why the combination of continuing gender discrimination, and the neglect of the particular needs of girls, have meant that girls all over the world have fewer opportunities than their brothers. These reports are not just about girls as victims of abuse and discrimination. They show how girls and young women – with the right support and sometimes in conjunction with boys and men – defend their rights and fight the traditions and attitudes that harm them. Girls and young women are the best defenders of their rights, but they need support and encouragement to speak out.

Call to Action:

Significantly increase investments and efforts in quality girls' education, from early childcare through to secondary education, to ensure girls gain assets and life skills necessary to have an improved chance in life.

Notes

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