



## INTRODUCTION: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE

The collection of case studies on lessons and results for gender equality and the empowerment of women has relevance for the advancement of the next internationally agreed development agenda. In this agenda, there is already much consensus on the need for a stronger focus on gender equality within the overall post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework. “Already, there are many discussions and debates on what should replace the MDGs and what shape the post-2015 development agenda should take. There are ongoing deliberations on

many different policy models to reduce poverty and inequality, achieve development, foster peace and security, promote and protect human rights, and protect the environment. In each of these, the need to achieve gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment should take centre stage, supported by a universal normative framework to which governments around the world have committed."<sup>1</sup>

*Advancing Gender Equality: Promising Practices – Case Studies from the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund* presents lessons and results of specific relevance to shaping the post-2015 development framework. It contains lessons to enhance knowledge of both why results for gender equality and women's empowerment are critical to advance an overall development agenda, as well as practical examples of how to make this a reality. In many ways the programmes documented here anticipate the gaps that have been identified in relation to the promotion of gender equality in the MDGs. As such, they provide an evidence base that links to many of the key issues currently under discussion and offers opportunities for replicating successes in policy and practice.

Areas addressed by the programmes include overcoming violence against women, access to sexual and reproductive health services, women's asset and property ownership, and participation in public and private decision-making. Programmes also present effective practices to address inequalities through partnership with some of the world's most excluded groups of women and girls: indigenous, Afro-descendant, ethnic minority, rural and young women; survivors of violence and conflict-related sexual violence; and HIV positive women. They represent the unified efforts of many actors and demonstrate how United Nations, government and civil society actors can work together to leverage individual strengths and achieve significant collective results. A hallmark of many of the case studies is that they demonstrate the means to challenge the underlying structures that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and inequality as a key component of programming.

<sup>1</sup> UN Women, 2013, *A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components*, p. 7.

## Background and Methodology

The MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F, [www.mdgfund.org](http://www.mdgfund.org)), established in 2007 through an agreement between the Government of Spain and UNDP on behalf of the United Nations system, is one of the largest and most comprehensive development cooperation mechanisms devised to support MDG attainment. Through its 130 joint programmes in 50 countries and eight different thematic areas, the MDG-F has gathered valuable and unique knowledge on how countries can advance in development goals through joint efforts that engage in different UN agencies, governmental institutions, the private sector, communities and civil society entities.

The MDG-F's approach, anchored in the principles of national ownership, the coordination of efforts by UN agencies and a multidimensional perspective in its development programmes, has proved to have an impact on people's lives throughout the world. Some indicators validate this: 840,000 children have better nutrition, 300,000 people have safe, affordable drinking water, 100,000 people received job training, 625,000 women and girls gained access to violence prevention and protection services and 14.3 million young people were helped by new youth employment laws. All this thanks to the joint efforts through the United Nations.

MDG-F has been an outstanding supporter of programming to advance gender equality. Stemming from the commitments established in 1995 at the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the MDG-F adopted a dual strategy for advancing gender equality with a portfolio of 13 targeted joint programmes promoting gender equality as a central goal, and gender-mainstreaming guidance<sup>2</sup> for 117 joint programmes targeting other development areas in eight funding windows

<sup>2</sup> MDG Achievement Fund, 2006, "Guidance for the Development of Gender-Responsive Joint Programmes", available at: [www.mdgfund.org/sites/all/themes/custom/undp\\_2/docs/MDGF-JP-Gender-Guidance.pdf](http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/all/themes/custom/undp_2/docs/MDGF-JP-Gender-Guidance.pdf).

that are aligned to the MDGs.<sup>3</sup> To capture promising practices in how successful gender equality results were achieved, the Gender as a Cross-Cutting Issue Knowledge Management Initiative was launched in 2010 under the coordination of UN Women to facilitate knowledge sharing across the eight joint programming windows established through the MDG-F. A call for proposals on Effective Practices in Promoting Gender Equality for MDG Achievement (the Documentation Initiative) was launched in September 2011 to identify and document innovative, promising and potentially replicable practices. After a careful review with UNDP and the MDG-F Secretariat, 14 proposals were selected to document promising practices with a high potential to contribute to the advancement of women's rights and gender equality.

The following cases studies were developed with support from the Documentation Initiative:

- One from the Children, Food Security and Nutrition Window (Bangladesh);
- Two from the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Window (Bolivia and Democratic Republic of the Congo);
- Two from the Culture and Development Window (Ecuador and State of Palestine);
- Two from the Democratic Economic Governance Window (Mexico and Panama);

- Four from the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Window (Colombia, Ethiopia, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam);
- Two from the Private Sector and Development Window (Egypt and Viet Nam); and
- One from the Youth, Employment and Migration Window (Honduras).

In addition, the MDG-F Gender Window Community of Practice Knowledge Transfer Initiative was launched in July 2011 by UNDP to facilitate the generation, exchange and application of knowledge on joint programming for gender equality based on the experiences of the funding window on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. As part of this initiative, the UNDP Gender Team contributed submissions from joint programmes in this window that did not participate in the Documentation Initiative, including from Bangladesh, Bolivia, Guatemala, Morocco, Namibia, and Nicaragua.

As a result of these joint efforts, 20 promising practices have been included. With a view to inform evidence-based policy and programming in support of women's rights and gender equality, this Global Compendium presents the main findings of such analyses, including progress and results achieved, lessons learned from each programme and its sustainability, scaling up and replication potential.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women, 2013, *Two Roads, One Goal: Dual Strategy for Gender Equality Programming in the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund*, available at: [www.unwomen.org/-/media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2013/3/f2\\_MDGF\\_TwoRoads\\_Web.pdf.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2013/3/f2_MDGF_TwoRoads_Web.pdf.pdf). Two Roads presents the initial findings of parallel UNDP and UN Women analyses of the effectiveness of the dual strategy to promote gender equality through a joint programming modality.