



**Gender and the Millennium Development Goals:
More Specific Targets and Indicators
For the Caribbean**

**Report of the Task Force on
Gender and Poverty**

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1. Introduction

Since their adoption in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have served as an important instrument for orienting development policy in the Caribbean region towards the achievement of a number of specific goals and targets. Indeed a number of countries, notably Guyana, Jamaica and members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), have prepared reports indicating progress made at the national level towards the achievement of the various MDGs.

Since their formulation in 2000, the Millennium Project commissioned 10 Task Forces to advise on the goals, targets and indicators and the recommendations from these form part of the 2005 Overview Report. More recently, the Secretary General of the UN has issued his own Report, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, an agenda that will be put before the Heads of State and Government for decision at the September Summit.

This paper is intended to contribute to the discussions on the revision of the MDGs and to make recommendations for the consideration by CARICOM member states regarding actions to be taken in relation to policies and programmes for the achievement of the goals.

2. Background

The Twelfth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) (27-29 April, 2005) considered the MDGs in the current Caribbean socio-economic context and urged the identification of Caribbean specific indicators. The meeting acknowledged the interdependence of the goals and also affirmed the centrality of gender and women's empowerment to the achievement of the MDGs. It recommended the mainstreaming of gender equity concerns throughout the Goals. In this context, the meeting paid special attention to gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights, about which targets and indicators had been excluded from the original formulation of the Goals, but are now recommended by three of the Project's task forces. The meeting also called for special attention to be given to drop out rates of boys from the school system.

In following up the COHSOD recommendations, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, convened a meeting of its Task Force on Gender and Poverty in May 2005 to identify Caribbean specific gender indicators for the MDGs. The

meeting was attended by representatives of national women's/gender machineries, the CARICOM Secretariat, the Caribbean Development Bank, the UN system and a number of gender justice experts.¹ This report contains the recommendations of that meeting.

3. Gender Equity Issues in the Caribbean

Women in the Caribbean have made incremental gains towards the achievement of gender equity, particularly since the first UN Decade for Women. This has taken place in the areas of legislation and policy, labour market participation and increased access to public resources such as tertiary education and health care. At the same time, however, there are continuing challenges to the full attainment of the goal of gender equity as well as areas in which progress has been reversed due to socio-economic decline and the changing role of the state occasioned by policies of adjustment and trade liberalisation. In addition, there are new threats to the wellbeing of Caribbean men and women, chief among these the rising incidence of crime and violence, the unrelenting spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the impact of natural disasters. Gender equality is heavily implicated in all of this and becomes more relevant with the current focus on implementing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. Greater efforts must be made towards removing existing gender inequities and the MDGs provide an integrated framework for addressing these.

Goal 1: Eradication of Poverty and Extreme Hunger

Poverty in the Caribbean continues to be gendered notwithstanding improvements in women's socio-economic status. Despite women's increasing labour force participation, they are less visible than men, operate in a stratified labour market, have higher unemployment rates, encounter greater barriers to entering the labour force and perform a disproportionate level of unpaid labour in the household and the agricultural sector. For example, the CWIQ² survey, carried out in St. Lucia in 2004 by the UNDP and EU, confirmed significant differences between females and males in terms of unemployment. A 14% unemployment level was reported for males and 25% for females. Youth employment was reported as 39% with female youth unemployment particularly high at 44%.

Trade liberalisation also has a negative impact on Caribbean economies, particularly for those economies with a reliance on the banana

¹ The Task Force is comprised of representatives from Bureau of Gender Affairs, Barbados, Women's Bureau (Jamaica), CARICOM Secretariat, Caribbean Development Bank, Caribbean Association of Feminist Research and Action, ECLAC, PAHO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNIFEM. The meeting was also attended by representatives of DFID and the EC and women's rights experts, Peggy Antrobus and Diane Cummins.

² The Report does not provide statistics from CARICOM member countries save and except as indications of more general trends. The Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) was designed as an instrument for monitoring poverty and household welfare.

and sugar industries. Both women and men have been adversely affected by the consequences of global trade liberalisation regimes – reduced unemployment and income earning opportunities. However, it has been argued that these economic contractions have a disproportionate effect on women as they are most evident in the closure of the garment and electronic factories where women tend to be concentrated and in the decrease of opportunities in the agricultural sector³. For Jamaica, one consequence of this in 2002 was precipitous drop in consumption for female headed households (14%) in contrast to 1.7% for male headed households.⁴

Disproportionate responsibility for caring work is another important factor contributing to the high incidence of poverty among women and the households that they head. Women care for the household, children, the elderly and the sick. The tasks are all unwaged, under-valued and reduce the amount of time women have for pursuing paid employment. For poor women employed outside the home, the care of a sick child or the time required to take care of sick family members can result in lost income. Gender inequality and women's marginalisation are also reinforced by the low value placed on women's work. Finally, women's health can be jeopardised by the increased burden placed on women when health services are reduced.

It is the confluence of limited and unequal labour market opportunities on the one hand and women's disproportionate responsibility for the care of the vulnerable (children, elderly and sick) that explains the differential gender experiences of poverty in the Caribbean. A CDB poverty assessment of St. Vincent and the Grenadines found female headship higher than male headship in the lowest quintile, reaching as high as 96% of poor households in communities. This is the trend across the Caribbean.

Low-income Caribbean women play major roles in the production, processing, marketing and preparation of food for households. Most often they do so with inefficient technologies, little or no access to land or credit, in short with minimal support and rewards, a situation exacerbated by their role in social reproduction (caring for the family). The conditions under which food is produced for local consumption must be considered as part of any programme for the implementation of the goal of the eradication of hunger.

For Caribbean men, gender issues in relation to poverty and hunger relate to the impact which economic hardship and insecurity have on their ability to realise the stereotypical role of breadwinner, a concept which is critical to an understanding of the construction of masculinity. A number of recent studies have also sought to draw a relationship between constrained labour market opportunities and risk taking behaviours of young men involved in the drug trade and consequentially in crime and violence.

³ See for example, Brenda Wyss and Marceline White: "The Effects of Trade Liberalisation on Jamaica's Poor. An Analysis of Agriculture and Services". UNIFEM/Women's Edge Coalition/CAFRA, 2004.

⁴ See Wyss and White cited at footnote 3.

Goal 2: Achieving Universal Primary Education

It is well acknowledged that given current trends in primary education, the MDG goal in this area would be achieved in the Caribbean. However, from the perspective of gender equality, the major challenges in education are the need to address gender stereotyping in the curriculum and in the orientation of teachers. Moreover, given the increasing level of violence in the society, clearly reflected in the schools, the issue of violence, especially the gendered nature of violence, and respect for girls, also needs to be addressed in school curricula.

Another emergent gender issue in education is the trend of under-achievement of boys throughout the school system, from higher primary to tertiary levels. This phenomenon is still under study but its causes have been linked to a number of factors such as poverty, perceptions of irrelevance of the education system to existing labour market opportunities, the lure of the informal and/or illegal economy, the under-involvement of men as fathers and teachers in the school system and differential gender socialisation and value systems. In addition, the CWIQ from St. Lucia also suggests that the male drop out rate is higher from female headed households among which are also found the poorer households.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The original formulation of the Goals included only one target for this Goal – the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education. However, although girls and women have lower attrition rates than boys, this has not translated at a commensurate pace into women's empowerment and improved position in Caribbean economies. Women continue to be heavily represented among the unemployed, the underemployed and in the low waged and unstable sectors. They also continue to be under-represented in all areas of governance including representational politics and decision-making positions and processes. The percentage of women in non-agricultural employment is also a questionable indicator in a region where the majority of low-income and poor women look to agriculture as their chief source of livelihood, not to mention sustenance for their families.

Indeed, the targets and indicators for this Goal are the clearest example of the inadequacy of the targets and indicators assigned in the original formulation. This issue has been raised in many of the Task Forces, and the omission of gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights has been corrected in both *Investing in Development* and in the Secretary General's recent report, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*.

Women in the Caribbean continue to be adversely affected by asymmetric relations of gender both at the material and ideological levels. These relations of gender determine women's access to material resources, their status and power and their ability to resist violations of their rights to personal safety. Despite important efforts by Caribbean states to confront **violence against women** through law reform, there is no doubt that this remains a hugely constraining reality. Forms of violence against women – domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, incest and murder – are widely experienced throughout the Caribbean. There is growing recognition of the need to develop and/or strengthen integrated regional and national level plans to combat violence against women. These plans would look at law reform, improvements in the justice system, education and gender socialisation, social services and importantly, cultural change.

In addition to attention to violence against women, the framework of gender-based violence allows for more targeted attention to violence in general. There is overwhelming evidence that gendered behaviours and gender value systems are important in explaining the perpetration of violence. How these variables interact with other socio-economic factors has to be considered as a core component of crime and violence policies.

Gender inequality also explains women's lack of full control of sexual and reproductive rights and limited access to reproductive health services both of which undermine health and well being. Some other issues that have negative implications for women's health are their reluctance or inability to negotiate safe sex because of their economic status, in some cases dependence on men, fear of violence and cultural/religious practices that can reinforce rigid notions of gender roles.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Caribbean countries are likely to achieve the set target by 2015, "provided they experience no major setback." However, both the under five and infant mortality rates are the result of a number of inter-related factors, including the nutrition, education and health knowledge of mothers; the availability of maternal and child health services; income and food availability, access to clean water, sanitation and child protection policies.

The connection between the situation and position of women, the relations between parents and the welfare of young children is clear. More attention therefore needs to be given to the socio-economic context in which child care takes place in the Caribbean: the poor living conditions under which the majority of the population lives, the sharing of responsibility for child care by men, the lack of proper housing, water and sanitation, and use of older children, especially girls, in the care of under-fives. This latter practice reinforces traditional gender roles, and heightens the vulnerability of young girls to sexual abuse.

Goal 5: Improving Maternal Health

Interventions to protect and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights must be an integral part of MDG strategies. Consequently, the strategies for reducing maternal mortality and meeting the target will be quite different from the strategies for protecting and promoting other aspects of maternal health and meeting the maternal health Goal overall. Those aspects are best captured by the broader concept of sexual and reproductive health endorsed at the Cairo and Beijing conferences. Protecting and promoting sexual and reproductive health has ramifications not just for health but also for multiple other Goals, including poverty reduction and gender empowerment. Although sexual and reproductive health requires action in multiple sectors, health sector interventions are at the core of sexual and reproductive health strategies.

To ensure that development strategies built around the Goals capture the non-mortality aspects of sexual and reproductive health, the task force proposes adding a target: **Universal access to reproductive and sexual health services through the primary healthcare system by 2015**. This new target directs attention not only to reproductive health issues but importantly to issues of equitable access to services.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases

Although lack of capacity to collect the data in the smaller islands and the weak HIV surveillance systems make it difficult to gauge accurately the extent of the HIV/AIDS problem in the Caribbean, there is evidence of a “show a strong upward trend” in the incidence of HIV/AIDS in all countries and in particular amongst young women and the economically disadvantaged.

HIV/AIDS is a gender issue, not only because women and girls are disproportionately affected in some age cohorts and as care givers, but more importantly because gender inequality, power relations and gender role stereotyping have implications for both women and men in the context of vulnerability to HIV.

Economic factors are also of major importance in explaining the spread of the disease. Where economic need is high, young women are often at very high risk of going into sex work, the drug trade and engaging in transactional sex for family survival - all impacting on HIV/AIDS. The combination of poverty, gender and age explains why the age group most vulnerable, and the one in which the disease is spreading most rapidly, is girls 15-18.

Finally, there are also gender issues for people living with HIV/AIDS. Women as traditional caregivers face particular risks in caring for people with HIV/AIDS. At the same time, women with the disease are unable to care for

themselves or their families, and the whole family, especially young children, suffers as a consequence.

Goal 7: Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

From a gender perspective, the priorities in this goal for the Caribbean can be described as ‘lives and livelihoods’ – focussing on access to water and sanitation, land and ocean resources. In the context of the MDGs in the Caribbean, there can be no doubt that the privatisation of water will place health-related goals in jeopardy, and represent a major problem of cost for the poor, particularly poor women.

4. New Targets and Indicators of the MDGs

All of the recommended amendments are in ***bold italics***.

GOALS & TARGETS	INDICATORS
Goal 1: Eradicate poverty and hunger	
Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people <i>who fall below the poverty line</i>	1. Proportion of population <i>living below poverty line, by sex</i> 2. Poverty gap ratio (incidence x depth of poverty), <i>by sex</i> 3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption, <i>by sex</i> 4. Proportion of employed living in households with a household per capita income <i>living below poverty line, by sex</i>
Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	5. Prevalence of underweight children, <i>by sex</i> 6. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption, <i>by sex</i>
Target 3: <i>Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of persons without access to basic services</i>	7. <i>Proportion of population with access to electricity by sex of head of household</i> 8. <i>Proportion of households using pit latrines by sex of head of household</i>
Target 4: <i>Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of persons living in inadequate housing</i>	9. <i>Proportion of population living in inadequate housing by sex of head of household</i>
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	
Target 5: Ensure that, by 2015,	10. Net enrolment ratio in primary

GOALS & TARGETS	INDICATORS
<p>children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary <i>and secondary</i> schooling</p>	<p>education, <i>by sex</i></p> <p>11. Percentage of pupils starting secondary level <i>form 1</i> who reach <i>form 5, by sex</i></p> <p>12. <i>Illiteracy</i> rate of 15-24 year olds, <i>by sex</i></p> <p>13. <i>Functional literacy rate of 15-24 year olds, by sex</i></p> <p>14. <i>Pass rates in CXC subject areas (English and Mathematics) by sex</i></p> <p>15. <i>Number of primary and secondary schools addressing gender stereotyping in curriculum</i></p>
<p>Target 6: <i>Ensure that, by 2015 pre-school age children have universal access to early childhood education</i></p>	<p>16. <i>Number of children attending early childhood education institutions, by sex</i></p>
<p>Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</p>	
<p>Target 8: Eliminate gender disparity in primary <i>and secondary</i> education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>	<p>17. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education</p> <p>18. <i>Functional literacy rate of 15-24 year olds, by sex</i></p> <p>19. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector</p> <p>20. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament</p>
<p>Target 9: <i>Reduce, by 2015, all forms of gender-based violence</i></p>	<p>21. <i>Development of integrated national action plans to eliminate gender based violence by 2010</i></p> <p>22. <i>Type of crime by age and sex of offender and age and sex of victim</i></p> <p>23. <i>Age and sex of persons who report experiencing physical violence in the past year at the hands of intimate partner</i></p> <p>24. <i>Percentage of sexual assault cases completed through the court process in a 12-month period of the date of charge</i></p>

GOALS & TARGETS	INDICATORS
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	
<p>Target 10: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</p>	<p>25. <i>Child mortality rate, by sex</i> 26. <i>Proportion of children fully immunised, by sex</i> 27. <i>Number of children injured through violence, by sex</i> 28. <i>Number of children killed through violence, by sex of victim and perpetrator</i></p>
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	
<p>Target 11: <i>Universal access to reproductive and sexual health services through primary health care systems achieved by 2015</i></p>	<p>29. <i>Proportion of contraceptive demand satisfied</i> 30. <i>Adolescent fertility rate</i></p>
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	
<p>Target 12: Have halted by 2015, and begin to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major <i>chronic diseases</i></p>	<p>31. <i>Prevalence of HIV/AIDS, adult and 15-24 year olds, by sex</i> 32. <i>Malaria prevalence rate, by sex and age</i> 33. <i>Prevalence of tuberculosis, by sex</i> 34. <i>Linkage between work on gender power and work on HIV</i> 35. <i>Prevalence of chronic diseases by sex and age</i> 36. <i>Provision of support services for primary caregivers</i></p>
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	
<p>Target 13: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources</p>	<p>37. <i>Proportion of households that have access to pipe borne water and sanitary facilities, by urban vs. rural, and urban slums by sex of head of household</i> 38. <i>Land tenure by sex of owner</i></p>

5. Policy Implications for the Caribbean

This section outlines some of the main actions which ought to be considered in developing a policy framework for meeting the recommended targets and indicators for the Caribbean.

General

The linkages between goals 1-7 must be recognised and affirmed, and particular attention given to the link between goal 3 (with revised targets and indicators) and all other goals.

Monitoring of the targets can only be accomplished through a harmonised **collection of core data which is disaggregated by sex**. This should be collected on an annual basis.

Goal #1 *Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger*

- ✓ Develop social protection policies and invest in infrastructure to support women in their care giving roles (e.g. provision of day care facilities; flexible working hours and related services)
- ✓ Reduce discrimination in labour markets by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation.
- ✓ The following studies should be conducted (all from a gender perspective and with sex disaggregated data):
 - Examining how people fall into poverty, and how they escape from this condition;
 - Support studies of ways in which poor families use non-market transfers to ensure their survival (the 'gift' economy).

Goal #2 *Achieve Universal Primary and Secondary Education*

- ✓ Attention to monitoring and reducing the attrition and/or drop out rates of boys and girls from primary and secondary schools. Policy formulation should address:
 - greater involvement of fathers in school-based activities and in caring for children;
 - teacher training;
 - gender socialisation;
 - support to families in crisis (and in particular female headed or single parent households);
 - monitoring the movements of children through the education system; and
 - Encouraging cultures of learning.

- ✓ Integrate gender concerns into this goal by addressing:
 - the removal of gender bias and discrimination in the curriculum and orientation of teachers;
 - addressing the issue of violence (the causes and catalysers of violent conduct);
 - the importance of early childhood education as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting gender equality.
- ✓ Conduct further research to explore and explicate:
 - the link between the under-performance of boys in school, gender socialization and the disconnect between formal education and opportunities for earning desirable levels of income;
 - the disconnect between girls' performance in school and their under-representation in key sectors of the labour force and in decision-making positions;

Goal #3 *Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women*

- ✓ Support and monitor the compliance with Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and implementation of Beijing Platform for Action through their integration in national gender policies and plans of action.
- ✓ Develop and implement inter-sectoral and national action plans to eliminate gender-based violence. The components of these plans should address the administration of justice, (law reform, police and judicial training) education and socialisation, social services and housing.

Goal #4 *Reduce Child Mortality*

- ✓ Attention needs to be given to the socio-economic context in which childcare takes place in the Caribbean, and especially to the time constraints on mothers' time, and the use of older children in the care of under five-year olds.
- ✓ Review, strengthen and enforce child protection policies and services with particular attention to child abuse (sexual, physical and emotional) in homes, schools and communities.

Goal #5 *Improve Maternal Health*

- ✓ Guarantee women's access to sexual and reproductive health services and their enjoyment of reproductive rights. Public health systems should provide quality family planning and emergency obstetric services.

Goal #6 *Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases*

- ✓ HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment programmes should be informed by gender analysis and address the gendered causes and consequences in combating the spread of the disease.
- ✓ Increase support and access to services for women in their role as care providers whether of persons living with HIV/AIDS or of families affected by the disease.

Goal #7 *Ensure Environmental Sustainability*

- ✓ Governments should commit themselves to guaranteeing access to potable water and sanitation as a public good.
- ✓ Guarantee women equal access to land and other environmental resources.

6. Emerging Global Consensus/Opposing Positions on Recommended Targets and Indicators

Since the release of the Secretary General's Report, there have been informal discussions on the Report at the UN, and a Draft Outcomes Document (Declaration) is now being circulated for comments by member states. NGOs have monitored these discussions, and the President of the General Assembly formed a Task Force to advise him on the participation of representatives of NGOs, Civil Society and the Private Sector at Hearings scheduled to take place at the General Assembly, June 23-24⁵.

Most active among the NGOs have been representatives of the women's global networks that had participated in the global conferences of the 1990s from which the Goals were derived. These networks have through the various Task Forces set up by the Millennium Project, recommended the inclusion of the issues of gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive rights, which had been excluded from the original formulation of the Goals.

The Task Force on Gender Equality and Education affirmed that gender equality is critical to achieving all of the MDGs and that likewise, achievement of all of the MDGs is critical to gender equality. It affirmed the human rights framework, including government commitments to CEDAW, as well as ongoing commitments to Beijing and Cairo, and laid out seven interdependent strategic priorities for international and national-level action by 2015, seen as the "minimum necessary to empower women." These are:

- Strengthen opportunities for post primary education/universal primary education
- Guarantee sexual and reproductive health
- Invest in infrastructure to reduce time burden
- Guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights
- Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings and reducing occupational segregation
- Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies
- Combat violence against girls and women

⁵ Peggy Antrobus has been selected as a Speaker in the Cluster on 'Freedom from Want' (Development).

The Secretary General's Report also recognised the importance of "ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services" and to "protecting women from violence" as intrinsic to the empowerment of women, "some of the most effective drivers of development" (p.13). Despite these strong statements of endorsement, there is still discussion over the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health in the recent informal discussions leading up to the preparation of the Draft Outcome Document (Declaration) for the September Summit.

The Draft Outcome Document "reaffirm(s) that gender equality and the promotion and protection of the *full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for women* are essential to advance development, security and human rights. CARICOM governments should therefore consider supporting the inclusion of new targets on violence against women and sexual and reproductive health which are of critical importance to achievement of Goals 3 and 5.

7. Conclusion

The MDGs provide an integrated framework for looking at human and social development in the Caribbean. They need however to be refined to take into account the socio-economic and cultural context of the Caribbean. This report has attempted to do this and has argued that gender equality should be a crosscutting theme throughout all of the goals and that the linkages between Goals 1-7 should be recognised and acted upon.

Caribbean-specific targets and indicators have been developed and some revisions made to the existing ones. These recommended revisions should enable the MDGs to be even more comprehensive and powerful tool for regional governments and organisations as they work towards social equity and economic development.

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