



## MDG #3

Promote Gender Equality And Empower Women



Gender inequality is still rampant in our world today. In many places it is interwoven into the fabric of ideals, cultures, and religions. This might seem like a foreign concept to someone from a westernized society that has embraced the concept of gender equality. Even in such societies, one could argue that the reality of gender inequality still exists given the dearth of women in politics and business, or the wage disparity between the sexes which seems to exist. Choosing to ignore the problem of gender inequality does not diminish its widespread destructive power across the globe, rather it perpetuates it.

This is why the third Millennium Development Goal ([www.globaldevelopment.org.au/mdg](http://www.globaldevelopment.org.au/mdg)) is "Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women."

MDG#3's specific goals are to increase the:

- Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector.
- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament. (<http://www.mdgmonitor.org/goal3.cfm>)

Within some societies women are regularly deemed the weaker, less important sex. They are the victims of constant abuse and discrimination – for example, in the freedoms they have, the choices they can make and the contribution they can bring. More often than not women have no choice but to endure the abuse simply because they are completely dependent on their abuser. If they choose to escape, with no marketable skills there are no dignified jobs open to them. Women wind up with the worst jobs, lesser pay, are more susceptible to diseases, rape, kidnap and trafficking. Their basic rights as human beings are stripped away. The end result of all this means women disproportionately carry the burden that is poverty; most of the poorest of the poor in the world are female due to gender discrimination and its impact.

Even though on average, women account for at least half of those within the refugee camp population, they typically have little or no say. They are not influential at all and barely participate in the decisions made for the camps. The ratio of men to women doesn't change anything, in fact according to a recent factsheet produced by the UN Department of Public Information girls actually account for around 55% of the out of school population. (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/pdf/newsroom/Goal%203%20FINAL.pdf>).

Furthermore it is crucial to understand that gender is one of the major obstacles in achieving all of the MDG's. Due to their vital position in society as the primary care givers, women have been recognised as 'the locus for development', so there can be no significant progress without gender equality.

Recognizing women's rights and the indispensable role that they play within the societies of the world is the first step to achieving this MDG goal and will in turn benefit the rest. Women are the key to effective development. This is why achieving MDG #3 is so paramount. Gender inequality perpetuates the cycle of dependence. This gap needs to be bridged.

Global Development Group has a number of projects that target MDG #3 head-on in an attempt to bridge this gap of gender inequality:

In Sri Lanka a project seeks to eradicate poverty in the long term by targeting the issue of lack of income for women. This is done by providing opportunities for skills training and income generation, thus giving women a means by which they are able to provide for themselves, giving them a marketable skill. Therefore no longer are these women dependent on others (J347).

Another great project is in Chennai, India. This project helps train women in business and provide micro-finance. They give out loans to women so they can commence self-sustainable small businesses. To qualify for a loan, co-ops are formed with up to 20 women, who start a bank account, then prove they can save and then loan to each other with their own savings to start a successful business over 12-18 months, before they can qualify for the larger external loan.

Businesses that have been started as a result include restaurants, sari making, wedding sari making, rice selling (wholesale & retail), bookshop/CD/DVD shops, public phone & stationary shops, and beauty shops. So far this has resulted in over 2000 loans for small businesses, giving women vital and significant financial independence and the ability to send their children to school (J544).

One project in Nepal focuses its attention specifically on children who have been hit the hardest during a particularly sensitive and fluid political situation. This project was established to provide a new life for these at-risk orphaned Nepalese boys and girls, placing equal importance on both boys and girls – which is a significant departure from the cultural treatment of girls in this region (J338).

In many GDG projects the aim is not only to increase the attendance of the girl child in primary school but also to attend to their sanitation needs to encourage them to stay in school until graduation. After this vocational training opportunities for girls need to be provide for.

In North Uganda a project that includes 10,000 children is having great success in ensuring equal participation of both boys and girls in school (J146).

These are just a few examples of Global Development Group's projects that focus on achieving MDG#3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.

■ For more information visit:  
[www.globaldevelopment.org.au/issue-2010-05](http://www.globaldevelopment.org.au/issue-2010-05)

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