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Statement submitted by Christian Aid, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Christian Aid is a Christian organization that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice, working through over 800 partners around the world and through the global network ACT Alliance — Action by Churches Together.

Introduction

Christian Aid welcomes this opportunity to submit a statement regarding the current Millennium Development Goals and their impact on women and girls, as well as lessons learned and their implications for a post-2015 development agenda.

Gender equality is absolutely essential both for the progressive realization of women's rights and for any successful development strategy. Women continue to bear the brunt of poverty. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the poor are women, and their lack of power and assets is a major obstacle to poverty eradication. Among other things,

- Thirty-five per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence
- Only 20 per cent of parliamentarians globally are women
- In Western Asia, South Asia and North Africa, the share of women in non-agricultural wage employment is under 20 per cent

Assessing the Millennium Development Goals

The inclusion of gender within the current Millennium Development Goals framework has, we believe, been positive, but far too limited in scope. The current Goals, including Goal 3 (with the target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education) and Goal 5 (with targets of reducing maternal mortality and achieving universal access to reproductive health), fail to fully convey the ambition of the Millennium Declaration and its vision for human dignity, equality and equity. In the case of Goal 3, efforts to promote gender equality and empower women have been reduced to the target of gender parity in education and there has been very little attention paid to other indicators of progress, including on political participation and employment. Nor has much been said about the importance of wider attitudinal and cultural change, including the need to work with men to bring about a shift in social norms. Christian Aid's analysis of Millennium Development Goal 5 in 2010 also pointed out that the target on maternal mortality has been harder to achieve owing to its correlation with other factors such as income inequality.

A more comprehensive picture can be gleaned from the Social Watch gender equity index, <http://www.socialwatch.org/taxonomy/term/527>, which shows how much needs to be done in the areas of women's economic participation and political empowerment. The index shows that it is possible to make progress on gender equity even within a context of widespread poverty. It cites Mongolia, Rwanda, the Philippines and Nicaragua as evidence of this, while some higher-income countries, including Japan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, still have significant disparities between

men and women. Similar work has been done by the World Economic Forum, which produces a Global Gender Gap Index, based on economic, political, education and health criteria, in its *Global Gender Gap Report*.

We do of course welcome the progress that has been made towards gender parity in primary education, despite the fact that 57 million children are still out of school. As *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* also shows, the gender disparities in secondary and tertiary education are still significant, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and South Asia (according to the report, only 2 out of 130 countries have reached the target of gender parity in all levels of education).

At the same time, other factors, such as the need for greater focus on educational quality and the number of children who stay in school, have been pointed out throughout the consultations on the post-2015 development agenda. In particular, Christian Aid would like to see a greater focus on persistent inequalities going forward. Our work in Latin America, for example, has highlighted the persistent stark inequalities between rich and poor girls within some countries. In Nicaragua, less than 10 per cent of poor rural girls attend secondary school, compared with 75 per cent of their rich urban counterparts. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, efforts have been made to support participation in education by indigenous girls, with some success: between 1992 and 2001, the proportion of rural girls completing six years of schooling increased from 41 per cent to 75 per cent.

Despite some of these shortcomings, Christian Aid believes that there is significant value in a global goal on gender equality and that it has been a powerful advocacy tool for organizations, including women's rights organization, seeking to hold their Governments to account. However, even with a gender-parity goal, gender equality continues to be underfunded. The 2013 Government Spending Watch report, "Putting progress at risk? MDG spending in developing countries" highlights particular concerns at the national level. The report notes that while gender budgeting is being used effectively in countries such as Rwanda, Bangladesh and India, there are currently no agreed global targets or costing for gender spending, and designated funding by agencies responsible for women's empowerment and rights constitutes only 0.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), and less than 0.2 per cent in a number of countries. The lack of data on gender spending makes it difficult to track, but the report estimates that since 2009, two thirds of countries have seen a decrease in gender spending as a percentage of GDP.

Post-2015 development agenda

Christian Aid believes that women and girls should be at the heart of a new post-2015 development strategy. We would argue strongly for new goals and targets aimed at driving transformational change and achieving a fundamental shift in power relations between men and women. We thoroughly welcome the contribution that the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has made so far to this debate and we stand with it in calling for a stand-alone goal within the new framework on gender equality and women's empowerment. A new development agenda without a stand-alone gender goal would be a step backwards and there would be a danger that gender could be "mainstreamed out of existence".

Christian Aid believes that the areas identified by UN-Women in a recent report on the post-2015 development agenda are critical to a revised stand-alone goal. We would strongly support a target aimed at eradicating gender-based violence along the lines of the target proposed in the 2013 report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. In addition, we would welcome new and revised targets in the areas of expression and participation, and capabilities and resources. The Gender and Development Network of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has also stressed the importance of mainstreaming gender across all new goals and has started to consider areas for targets and indicators in a recent report. Data disaggregation will, of course, be essential in this endeavour.

For Christian Aid, it is important for a new post-2015 development agenda to respond to the priorities of women around the world who remain impacted by poverty and inequality. Our overarching call for the post-2015 period is for a focus on sustainability and equality, including a transformational shift in power and gender relations. Christian Aid's recent report on the post-2015 development agenda, "The world we want to see: perspectives on post-2015", brings together a number of contributions from partners around the world, nearly all of which cite gender as either a key priority or an important consideration. The contributions include a powerful argument from Afghanistan for the inclusion of women in public life; from Angola, a plea for greater economic empowerment and educational opportunities for women and girls; and from INERELA+, a groundbreaking network of faith leaders living with HIV, a call for the eradication of gender-based violence and a continued focus on improving maternal health, including sexual and reproductive health. Several partners also point out that gender intersects with other inequalities and that gender inequality can be exacerbated by inequitable and unsustainable economic models that exploit those who have the least.

Recommendations

Drawing on our work with partners, Christian Aid calls for Member States to agree on a post-2015 development agenda with women and girls at its heart that includes a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment as well the following:

- New targets on eliminating violence against women and girls
- Participation of women and girls in political and public life Economic justice for women and girls, including equal access to and control of resources, e.g., land and finance
- Mainstreaming of gender considerations throughout the whole post-2015 framework, including areas such as health, education and food security
- Strong support for the "data revolution", including data disaggregated by gender, economic quintile, age, disability, caste, ethnicity and other relevant criteria
- A complementary goal or target to reduce income inequality