



THE 'ENVIRONMENT GOAL'

Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 9 Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources

- Indicators** *Proportion of land area covered by forest*
Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area
Energy use (kilograms of oil equivalent) per \$1 GDP (PPP)
Carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (ODP tons)
Proportion of population using solid fuels

Target 10 Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation

- Indicators** *Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural*
Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural

Target 11 By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

- Indicators** *Proportion of households with access to secure tenure*

Environmental sustainability is inextricably linked to gender equality

Understanding and taking account of the linkages between environmental sustainability and gender inequality is not only essential to the achievement of Goals 3 and 7, it is essential to reducing poverty.

- **Poor households are dependent for survival on common property resources.** Fallow lands and grazing grounds, forests, water bodies and wetlands are the main sources of food, water, fuel, fodder, building materials and livelihood for the poor. Even comparatively well-off households rely on these resources during lean seasons or in times of crisis. Women are the main users of these resources, and are often custodians of a rich store of traditional knowledge on their sustainable use. Women's access and control of environmental resources is therefore central both to environmental sustainability and poverty reduction.

- **Women have customarily engaged in survival agriculture on common lands since they do not have access to other land.** Women are therefore disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation, as well as by measures such as restrictions of access to forests, leasing or sale of common lands to private entrepreneurs and conversion of common lands to other uses.
- **The need for daily collection of fuel, fodder and water** is a factor forcing girls to drop out of school in many developing countries, thus contributing to undermining the capabilities of the next generation of women.
- **Women are the primary managers of domestic energy resources.** Collection of fuel takes up a major share of the time of poor women. The non-availability of cheap and clean fuels forces women to rely on wood, dung and biomass fuels, with adverse impacts on their health and the health of their children.
- **Women bear the brunt of natural disasters.** They carry the primary responsibility for enabling the family to deal with and survive the trauma and impoverishment that may follow a crisis. Gender inequality places limits on women's capabilities, reduces their agency and excludes them from decision-making in the aftermath of a disaster. Gender equality is therefore essential for vulnerability reduction.
- **Recent moves towards introducing pricing and cost recovery as measures for water conservation have contributed to women's poverty.** Women, who are responsible for supplying and managing the family's water needs, either deprive themselves of other essential goods and services to pay for water, or walk for miles to get water from unsafe but free sources.
- **Women are disproportionately impacted by the lack of sanitation facilities.** Poor sanitation is a major cause of water-borne diseases, which are directly responsible for most infant deaths in developing countries. In the absence of sanitation close to their homes, women are forced to forego privacy and security and are often rendered vulnerable to infections, harassment and abuse. Lack of separate toilets in schools has been identified as a cause of girls dropping out when they reach puberty.
- **Women in urban settlements have different priorities for services and infrastructure** such as transport, water supply, sanitation and housing. An increasing number of urban households in most developing countries are sustained exclusively or primarily by women's labour. Women's vulnerability to sexual and physical harassment in urban environments constrains their freedom of mobility and limits their work opportunities. The low representation of women in urban governance in many countries contributes to their invisibility in urban planning.

Putting women at the centre of environmental policies increases sustainability

Environmental sustainability, like gender equality, is a cross-cutting issue. Integrating gender equality concerns into environmental policy and planning has been identified as a key priority by the Millennium Project Task Force on Environmental Sustainability. Taking women's needs and priorities into account and involving women in environmental policy-making has multiple benefits in terms of better targeting and increased efficiency of policies and programmes.

Making the links between environmental sustainability and gender equality visible in the national MDG report can contribute to increasing coordination and integration of environmental policies into other

sectoral policies. Moreover, it can enhance public awareness of women's roles and create space for women to directly engage in actions for environmental sustainability at the community level.

The report of the Millennium Task Force on Environmental Sustainability lists these, and underlines their relationship of Goal 7 with other Goals.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- *Livelihood strategies and food security of the poor often depend directly on functioning ecosystems and the diversity of goods and ecological services they provide.*
- *Insecure rights of the poor to environmental resources, as well as inadequate access to environmental information, markets, and decision making, limit their capacity to protect the environment and improve their livelihoods and well-being.*

2. Achieve universal primary education

- *Time that children, especially girls, spend collecting water and fuelwood can reduce study time.*

3. Promote gender equality and empower women

- *Time that women spend collecting water and fuelwood reduces their opportunity for income-generating activities.*
- *Women's often unequal rights and insecure access to land and other natural resources limit opportunities for accessing other productive assets.*

4. Reduce child mortality

- *Water and sanitation-related diseases and acute respiratory infections, primarily caused by indoor air pollution, are leading causes of mortality in children under the age of five.*

5. Improve maternal health

- *Indoor air pollution and carrying heavy loads during late stages of pregnancy put women's health at risk before childbirth.*

6. Combat major diseases

- *Environmental risk factors account for up to one-fifth of the total burden of disease in developing countries.*
- *Preventive environmental health measures are as important, and at times more cost-effective, than health treatment.*

7. Develop a global partnership for development

- *Since rich countries consume far more environmental resources and produce more waste than poor countries, many environmental problems (such as climate change, loss of species diversity, and management of global fisheries) must be solved through a global partnership of developed and developing countries.*

*From Environment and Human Well-being: A Practical Strategy
Report of the Task Force on Environmental Sustainability. UN Millennium Project 2005
The Earth Institute at Columbia University, New York, USA*

How gendered is reporting on Goal 7?

Given the amount of research and advocacy on gender issues and concerns in environment and urban development in the past decades, it is disturbing to see the almost total invisibility of gender concerns in reporting under Goal 7. **Only eight of 78 reports reviewed make any mention of women as stakeholders in environmental issues.**

This situation is both a reflection of and a contributor to the gap between environmental policies and gender equality concerns. Despite the visible evidence of women's involvement in management of natural resources like water and forests, they are not recognised either as significant actors in conserving and sustaining these resources, or as stakeholders in planning.

Over the last decade, even mainstream economists have begun to validate feminist analyses of the interlinkages between gender inequality, poverty and degradation of common property resources. The silence on this issue in the reviewed reports is disappointing. The implications of environmental degradation for girls' education, maternal health and child survival have been completely ignored – instead, practically all the reports approach the issue of environmental sustainability from a technical perspective.

Gender issues in reporting on Goal 7

- **Need to involve women for sustainable management of water** (Gambia, Kenya, Indonesia)
- **Time spent in fetching water** (Kenya)
- **Safe water linked with reduction in IMR and MMR** (Ethiopia)
- **Discrimination against female-headed households in urban areas** (Uganda)
- **Tenure/land rights for women in municipal housing projects** (Brazil)
- **Women as stakeholders in National Environment Action Plan** (China, Guinea)
- **Access to water supply for male-headed and female-headed households** (Guatemala)

Strengthening reporting on Goal 7

- Providing **sex-disaggregated data** and information on access to water, sanitation and housing.
- Gendered reporting on **regional environmental issues** identified by the Millennium Project Task Force on Environmental Sustainability, all of which have significant implications for women's poverty and gender equality.
- Even where there is no data, **highlighting the connections** between Goal 7 and the other MDGs with qualitative information on key gender issues such as women's access to water and sanitation, urban safety and participation in planning and implementing environmental programmes.
- **Identifying and using alternative data sources** such as reports on urban conditions by UN agencies, civil society organisations and citizen's groups.

Regional issues have gender dimensions

- **Latin America** - deforestation, pollution, and damage to coastal and marine ecosystems. Direct impact on women's livelihoods.
- **Small island developing states including Caribbean and Pacific islands** - climate change, marine ecosystem health, alien invasive species, and pollution. Direct impact on women's livelihoods.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa** - soil and land degradation, depletion of forests and freshwater resources, and poor indoor air quality. Direct impact on women's health and livelihoods.
- **Middle East and North Africa** - declining per capita water resources, loss of arable land, pollution-related health problems, and weak environmental institutions and legal frameworks. Direct impact on women's health and livelihoods. Increased pressure of unpaid care work. Lack of means to claim entitlements increases vulnerability.
- **South Asia** - freshwater scarcity and pollution, and soil and land degradation. Direct impact on women's health and livelihoods.
- **Central Asia** - land cover change and freshwater degradation. Direct impact on women's livelihoods.
- **East and Southeast Asia** - soil and land degradation, deforestation, and poor urban air quality. Direct impact on women's health and livelihoods.

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