

## Preface

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The report on 2003 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was prepared in collaboration with the UN System and the Government of Malawi. It builds on an earlier report presented at the 2002 Monterrey UN Conference on Financing for Development. The Malawi report was one of the five country case studies which demonstrated the financial feasibility of achieving the MDGs.

This report describes the progress made towards achieving these goals. It reviews the development context of Malawi and assesses all the development goals, except the eighth goal on global partnership for development. The findings indicate that halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and reducing under-five mortality rate by two-thirds, could probably be achieved by 2015. It is also feasible to achieve, by 2015, the following goals:

- (i) halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty,
- (ii) providing universal primary education,
- (iii) halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

However, reducing the maternal mortality rate, by three-quarters, would not be achieved if the current trend continues. Overall, the report indicates that progress is being made towards the achievement of some goals, but not others.

The reduction of maternal mortality rate is of great concern. In Malawi, for every 100,000 live births, 1,120 mothers die and this rate has almost doubled in less than ten years. This is a clear indication of women's limited access to quality reproductive and health services. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate for young women, aged between 15-24 years, is six times higher than that of males of the same age group. Some issues that have been identified and which contribute to this situation are women's low socio-economic status, the culture of silence on sexuality and sexual reproductive health. Others, particularly among females, include gender-based violence and traditional practices that pre-dispose young females to early and unprotected sexual relations. Furthermore, wide gender disparities remain in the education sector, although it is acknowledged that education is a key to women empowerment. The literacy rate is 51 percent for women compared to 64 percent for men. Enrolment for both girls and boys, at primary school level, has increased almost to parity as a result of introducing free primary education in 1994, and other interventions made by the Government, such as, the Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) Project. Nonetheless, there is a high drop-out rate among girls in higher classes.

The key challenge for Malawi, therefore, is to transform the fundamental socio-cultural factors that create and perpetuate gender inequalities in the society. This requires some culture-specific research and interventions, knowledge and skills in gender research, analysis and planning. In addressing the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS, which increase women's susceptibility to infection and their vulnerability to the impact of the disease, it is critical to ensure equal participation of women and men in issues aimed at reversing the epidemic. The UN System will continue to provide substantive support and capacity to Malawi in its endeavour to address these development challenges and commit its full support to the strategies that would lead towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.



Zahra Nuru  
United Nations Resident Coordinator