Research Paper

No Empowerment without Rights, No Rights without Politics: Gender-Equality, Mdgs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda

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ABSTRACT: The main argument of this paper is that progress towards gender equality and women'sempowerment in the development agenda requires a human rights-based approach, and requires support forthe women's movement to activate and energize the agenda. Both are missing from Millennium DevelopmentGoal (MDG) 3. Empowerment requires agency along multiple dimensions—sexual, reproductive, economic,political, and legal. However, MDG 3 frames women's empowerment as reducing educational disparities. Byomitting other rights and not recognizing the multiple interdependent and indivisible human rights of women,the goal of empowerment is distorted and "development silos" are created. Women's organizations are key

actors in pushing past such distortions and silos at all levels, and hence crucial to pushing the gender equalityagenda forward. However, the politics of agenda setting also influences funding priorities such that financialsupport for women's organizations and for substantive women's empowerment projects is limited. To re-focusthe post-2015 Development Agenda around human rights, we conclude by outlining an approach of issue-basedgoals and people-focused targets, which makes substantive space for civil society including women's rightsorganizations.

KEYWORDS: Gender; Empowerment; Development; Poverty; Human rights

I. INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), their targets and their indicators have dominated developmentdiscourse in the last two decades, being upheld as the gold standard for development by variousinternational organizations. Yet some have argued that these goals are reductionist, simplistic and do notdo justice to the Millennium Declaration (Amin 2006; Fukuda-Parr 2012; Kabeer 2010; Langford 2010;Saith 2006; Sen 2013; Vandermoortele 2012; Yamin and Falb 2012). The breadth and depth of theDeclaration necessarily meant choosing a tractable set of goals, targets and indicators to guide policiesand monitor outcomes. However, the politics of agenda setting prioritized a narrow set of issues withinparticular themes such as poverty alleviation and women's empowerment. Themes such as inequalityand sustainability were absent altogether in the MDGs. While the goals give us a relatively narrowview of development, the chosen targets and indicators led to largely disconnected funding andpolicy priorities instead of the integrated approach envisioned in the Millennium Declaration. Thedevelopment agenda shaped by the MDGs created what have been termed "development silos"

(DAWN 2012), delinked from human rights and the principles outlined in the Millennium Declaration. This paper focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG 3). Its core argument isthat progress toward this goal in the development agenda requires two ingredients that are missingfrom the MDG framework—a human rights-based approach, and support for women's organizationsto advocate for it. Human rights gradually gained prominence in the development debate through theUN conferences of the 1990s, the work of the Special Rapporteurs appointed by the Human RightsCouncil, and advocacy by civil society organizations. The World Conference on Human Rightsheld in Vienna during 1993 was a critical milestone for a rights-based approach to development,especially for gender equality and the empowerment of women. More than 800 non-governmentalorganizations were represented at the conference and more than 1500 at the civil society forumpreceding the conference.

The common ground forged between different actors integrated the rightsof all people as a fundamental basis for designing and implementing laws, development programsand financing. Human rights were declared universal, indivisible and interdependent, and women'srights—economic, political, cultural, reproductive and sexual, including bodily autonomy and integrity—were officially acknowledged as human rights.

The women's rights movement had previouslysucceeded in generating support for the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminationagainst Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979.1 But Vienna signaled a watershed through its inclusionof women's rights groups from the South and North in the mainstream human rights movement. Theiradvocacy led to women's rights being treated as indivisible and interdependent in both private andpublic spheres, and the right to self-determination as including freedom to make sexual and reproductivechoices (Abeyesekara 2005; UN 1993).

The UN system provided several other platforms where civil society advocated embedding humanrights in the development agenda and obtained concrete commitments from governments (Abeyesekara2005; Antrobus 2005; Fukuda-Parr, Yamin, and Greenstein 2014; Saith 2006). In particular, demands torecognize women's reproductive and sexual choices were taken forward successfully by women'sgroups in Cairo in 1994 and Beijing in 1995, despite bitter opposition from religious conservativegroups.

At the UN International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, sexualand reproductive health and rights, women's empowerment, and male responsibility were highlightedas central to addressing population and development concerns. At the Fourth World Conference onWomen in Beijing, more than 50 000 women negotiated with governments and other stakeholdersover 12 areas of concerns and 42 sub-themes, locating women's empowerment in multiple dimensionsof agency at the individual, household, national and international levels (Sen and Mukherjee 2013;UN 1995).

With so much prior achievement, how were the MDGs narrowed down in their approach? In 1996,the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) came up with a list of International DevelopmentGoals and time-bound quantitative targets informed by earlier conferences but distinct in twoimportant respects. First, they were formulated by a small group of rich countries and not by theglobal community; and there was no place given to civil society organizations. Second, these were anarrower set of targets (such as halving poverty as defined by the World Bank criterion of $1 a day),less ambitious than the vision of development couched within a rights-based approach. In October2000, the International Development Goals were articulated as the MDGs in a joint report by theUN, OECD, World Bank and IMF (Saith 2006). This report elicited strong criticism from variouscivil society stakeholders for its hollowing out of the development agenda (Galtung et al. 2008). Nonetheless,in 2002 these narrower goals, couched within the neo-liberal agenda of the Monterrey conferencedocument on Financing for Development, were supported by a number of governments. In theMonterrey consensus, external assistance was contingent on poor countries taking steps towards liberalizingmarkets and following fiscal discipline and the role of the private sector was emphasized strongly.

The rights-based approach that was central to earlier international agreements on development andgender equality was eroded (Galtung et al. 2008; Saith 2006; UN 2003). The MDGS represented aNorth–South compromise to give greater focus to development but built on continuity of neoliberalmacroeconomic policies. On this basis they became synonymous with the global developmentagenda, bringing together multiple stakeholders: development agencies, national governments, regional governments and civil society organizations (Fukuda-Parr 2012, 2013).

Women's rights had a mixed passage in this compromised context. MDG 3 was explicitly framed interms of gender equality and women's empowerment. Substantive promotion of these had much potentialnot only for MDG 3 but also to achieve other goals. Yet MDG 3 was whittled down to uncontroversialissues and disjointed targets and indicators. The nature of interdependence and indivisibility of women's human rights is elaborated below to show how important it is in empowering women and why the MDG framework falls short in this respect.

Millennium Development Goal 3.
Goal 3: "Promote gender equality and women's empowerment"
Target
3A: "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, andin all levels of education no later than 2015"
Indicators:
3.1: Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
3.2: Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
3.3: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

The Political Economy of the MDGs and Women's Empowerment
The Empowerment-Rights Nexus
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), is credited with earliest writings on women's empowerment which drew upon practical experienceswith policies, programs and civil society actions in several countries (Sen and Mukherje, 2014;, Sen and Grown 1987).Empowerment was understood by DAWN and in the

pioneering work of Batliwala (1994) andothers to mean the transformation of unequal power relations. It includes the processes by whichpeople who have been unable to exercise agency or autonomy gain such abilities. Such a transformationrequires both external resources (such as land, credit, access to technology and markets, supportive politicalinstitutions and cultural norms) and internal capacities (such as knowledge and self-confidence).

Resources and capacities shape people's ability to act upon plans and lead the lives they desire. Howwomen empower themselves varies in different contexts and cultures, but certain elements arecommon and central Sen and Mukherje (2014). Empowered women are not only able to access resources, or participate in politicsand public life, but also enjoy bodily autonomy and integrity, and freedom from violence. While therehas been healthy debate on such aspects of agency and empowerment, it is evident that empowerment isnot only about addressing immediate inequalities faced by women but also changes in consciousnessand agency that challenge patriarchal structures (Sen and Mukherje, 2015; Batliwala 1994, 2007; Bisnath and Elson 1999;Kabeer 1999; Malhotra, Schuler, and Boender 2002; Sen 1994). This requires agency along multipledimensions—sexual, reproductive, economic including unpaid care, political, legal—and multiple freedomsincluding, most importantly, from threats and violence. All of these are interdependent and indivisibleas understood in human rights discourse.

Drawing from Batliwala (1994, 2007), Bisnath amd Elson, Kabeer (1999), Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002)and Sen (1994) Sen and Mukheje (2014) concluded that women's agency can be promoted by shifting the distribution of resources—assets, institutions,norms, and knowledge—in favor of women, and ensuring freedom from violence so they can exercisegreater control over their lives and have a wider set of choices Interdependence and indivisibilitymean that advancement in some dimensions of agency can lead to progress on others (Sen and Mukherje, 2014). Equally, lackof progress on some dimensions can hamper others. This is illustrated by the fact that countries asdiverse as Malawi, Cuba, China, Latvia, France and the USA, have similar Global Gender GapIndex (GGGI) scores (Sen and Mukherje 2014)—the GGGI being a weighted average of achievements in education, economicparticipation and opportunity; health and survival and political empowerment.

Highergross domestic product per person (that, on average, leads to better capabilities such as education,health and economic outcomes) does not necessarily lead to higher levels of gender equality inFrance, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

The reasons lie in the complex interlinking of gender inequalities. Improving women's education andhealth does not translate into empowerment if women do not have sexual and reproductive rights, freedomfrom the drudgery of unpaid work such as fetching water, fuel, other housework, the same political rightsand access to productive assets and economic opportunities as men, or freedom from violence (UNMillennium Project 2005). The reverse also holds; insufficient access to assets, limited sexual and reproductiverights, or significant time spent in unpaid household chores can limit health and educationalachievement.

The foundation for an approach that recognizes this interdependence was laid in Vienna in 1993 at thehuman rights conference, and carried forward in the Cairo and Beijing conferences of 1994 and 1995.Yet it was missing from MDG3's targets and indicators, which are narrowed down to reducing genderdisparities in all levels of education, and ad hoc measures of women's employment in the non-agriculturalsector and political representation.The problem is three-fold. First, key aspects of women's autonomy and agency, in particular theirsexual and reproductive rights, were omitted altogether by the MDGs. Only around one-quarter ofthe issues covered by the Beijing Platform for Action were directly or indirectly covered by anMDG target or indicator(s) or both—education, health, women's employment and political representation,and access to water and sanitation. Several other crucial rights and areas of intervention didnot find any place in the MDG framework, and neither did different aspects of discrimination andmeasures to tackle these as given in CEDAW (Sen and Mukherjee 2013). Such omissions areglaring, integral as these are to women's self-determination and bodily integrity.

Second, women's economic and political participation was not handled with sufficient depth. Since gender is a social construct with considerable diversity across countries and sub-national areas, goals and targets have to leave enough room for national and local implementation strategies appropriate to specific contexts. MDG3 has a single target—to eliminate gender disparities in education—but education by itself cannot capture the many and diverse forms of discrimination. It is not very helpful for countries where there are few gender gaps in education that are inimical to girls, but where inequality manifests in several other dimensions such as violence against women, as in the Caribbean, Sri-Lanka and Kerala (India) necessarily translate into better economic opportunities.

More, other human rights violationssuch as insufficient access to political positions and high incidence of violence against women mayremain even for educated women. Even in economically advanced countries

such as Norway, theUSA and Germany and emerging economies of Brazil where there are no gender gaps in education,a significant proportion of women have experienced violence by an intimate partner (Sen and Mukherje, 2014).Similarly, an increased share of women in non-agricultural wage employment (MDG Indicator 3.2)and in parliament (MDG Indicator 3.3) has the potential to improve women's position in their households,and in public policy formulation and implementation respectively(Sen and Mukherje, 2014).

However, such factors aloneare not magic bullets. Political representation is problematic when women in political positions have torefashion themselves to be "honorary males" who reinforce patriarchal norms and rules or when suchrepresentation is still embedded in institutions that are "male-biased" (Devika and Mukherjee 2007;Elson 1995). Non-agricultural wage employment yields minimal benefits to women if the work is insecure,informal, poorly paid without social security and other benefits, and devalues women's unpaidcare responsibilities and the constraints these impose on them. Thus, women's shares of non-agriculturalemployment are certainly higher in developed countries but not necessarily matched by equal earnings. Countries such as Bangladesh that have had female heads of state for several years, oreven Norway that scores high on female political representation, still have high proportions of womenfacing intimate partner violence (Sen and Mukherje, 2014).

The inadequacy of MDG indicators of wage employment and political representation,disconnected from other dimensions of inequality, are insufficient to measure genderinequality per se (Sen and Mukherje, 2014). This brings us to the third problem.

II.   THE PROBLEM OF SILOS

It is evident that the MDGs did not have women's human rights adequately built into their framework oftargets and indicators such that gender equality and women's empowerment could make consistent progress.As outlined above, this is not only a matter of outright omissions such as violence against women,or the "care" work that women are responsible for, but also by prioritizing some rights over others. Educationand health were prioritized over economic and political rights; and even within health, maternalhealth and HIV/AIDS were prioritized to the exclusion of sexual and reproductive health more generally (Sen and Mukherje 2014; Baba, Rajwani and Hussayn, 2014).

The inclusion of universal access to reproductive health as target 5B only occurred much later inthe MDG process after much pressure and advocacy. Such narrowness served to disconnectMDGs fromeach other and created "development silos" in practice (DAWN 2012).For instance, progress for MDG 1 on the reduction of extreme poverty would probably be faster ifgender inequality were addressed effectively (Sen and Mukherje 2014; Hussayn et al 2016). Since the standard measures of extreme poverty such as$1.25 a day are at the household level, it is not possible to prove this directly. However, it is generallyaccepted that, because women are less educated, less likely to have productive assets such as land andfinance, less likely to have paid work and, when working for pay, likely to be paid less than men, it isplausible that women are more likely to live in poverty (Elson and Balakrishnan 2012; Kabeer 2003;OECD 2010; UNW 2012).

If MDG 3 was framed to address gender inequalities along these multipledimensions, then the potential to reduce hunger would be greater. Studies show that when women aremore educated and have greater control over household expenditure, child malnutrition tends to belower (World Bank 2003). Given the feminization of agriculture in regions that hold a large share ofthe world's poor (such as India and China), development of both agricultural and non-agricultural livelihoodswith women as empowered participants of the process is necessary. Improving women's access toadequate finance, appropriate technologies and the know-how to use such technologies would raise productivity,reduce hunger and reduce poverty (UN Millennium Project 2005; World Bank 2012).

MDG2 on educational achievement could be realized if the barriers to girls' education, such asdemand for their labor at home, early marriage, and perceptions of girls' future roles as caregiverswith limited earning opportunities, are tackled along with ensuring safety in schools, larger numbersof women teachers, and availability of decent toilets. An increase in girls' attendance would contributesignificantly to a rise in overall attendance ratios. Educated girls and women have greater control overtheir fertility, and this leads in turn to higher likelihoods of their children's school enrollment and betterhealth and nutrition outcomes (Kabeer 2005; UN Millennium Project 2005; World Bank 2012).

Gender equality is also critical to achieving MDG 4,MDG 5 and MDG 6 on reducing child mortality,improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases respectively. Higherunder-five mortality among girls than boys is strongly associated with gender biases such as daughteraversion and son preference. Maternal morbidity and mortality are not only on account of weak healthcaresystems but also a variety of harmful practices and constraints that violate women's human rights,such as early and forced marriage, violence including by intimate partners, and constrained sexual andreproductive choices regarding contraception or safe and legal abortion.

For young women and adolescents,the absence of comprehensive sexuality education increases the risk of early pregnancy, and sexuallytransmitted infections. More than 60% of the roughly one million HIV infections among youngpeople aged 15–24 are among girls and women (OECD 2010; UNW 2012; World Bank 2012).MDG 7 on environmental sustainability includes the target of improving access to drinking water andsanitation. Access to adequate water and sanitation not only prevents excess child and female mortality,but also reduces women's unpaid labor time, a factor preventing their participation in paid work and in thepublic sphere. More, women's economic participation as the primary caretakers within their householdstypically makes them the repositories of knowledge on common local and environmental resources suchas forests, flora, fauna, water bodies, and so forth. Gender biases that prevent women's participation,especially indigenous, migrant and refugee women, in public policy formulation and implementationshort-change processes designed to promote sustainability (UNDP 2012; UNESCO 2010).

Persistent gender inequalities within homes and outside pose significant obstacles to achieving theMDGs. Removing such inequalities would empower women to improve their own and their families' standardof living, and achieve other development goals. Such synergies are acknowledged in the MillenniumDeclaration and also by the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank and the UN Inter-Agency Network onWomen and Gender Equality (UN 2000, 2001, 2005, 2012; OECD 2010; UNESCO 2010; WorldBank 2003, 2012).

Yet the MDG framework effectively ignores them, as do the related national policies,thereby stunting their transformative potential. This is exacerbated by lack of clarity on the processes bywhich MDG targets are to be achieved, or how indicators are to be used to track progress (Fukuda-Parr2012; Vandermoortele 2012). While methods of implementation have to respond to context, consistencytowards the basic goals requires basic guidelines, benchmarks, and guidance on alternative approaches.

The recommendations of the thematic task forces of the Millennium Project did provide detailed policyand program alternatives, good practices, and identified risks and shortcomings, but these were not incorporatedeffectively into the MDG framework (Sen and Mukherje, 2014). Although the latest report of UNWomen on the post-2015Development Agenda takes these concerns on board, it remains to be seen howthese will filter through thepolitical processes shaping the post-2015 Agenda and outcomes (UNW 2013).

III. THE RIGHTS POLITICS LINKAGE
The policy silos created by the MDGs deepened pre-existing fissures between and among advocates ofeconomic justice and of gender justice; fissures that women's organizations have struggled to bridge.Such politics work to suppress women's rights in intended and unintended ways, and are also representativeof power interests that sustain gender and other structural inequalities (Sen and Mukherje 2014; Duran 2012; Harcourt 2006).

The hegemony of the neo-liberal economic agenda poses serious challenges for economic justice

since the 1980s this agenda has shaped global and national economic policies towards fiscal conservatism,open markets for capital and commodities, privatization, and a greater role to financial and corporate sectors. Such policies have had the combined effect of increasing inequalities between andwithin countries, loosening labor market regulations, pushing down wages, especially female wages,in export-oriented sectors, reducing real incomes and job growth, increasing social conflict and exclusionfrom common resources (Ghosh 2005; Stiglitz 2002; UNICEF and UNW 2013).

Although recurringfinancial crises through the 1990s and more recently the great recession of 2008 have cast seriousdoubt on such market fundamentalism, its global dominance continues. A majority of all economies stillretain a substantial neoliberal slant to their economic policies, prioritizing growth over developmentapproaches that include widespread improvement in the material well-being of citizens and the freedomsto which they have access.

The growing inequality in the global economy has manifested as a struggle between South and North(G77 vs. G8) over the "right to development," trade and investment policies, and development assistance.These politics constitute a shifting terrain, with the emergence of fissures and fractions, new economicpowers (such as BRICs) and changing struggles for economic and political dominance. Thepolitics of gender equality and women's human rights have tended to get caught within these powerstruggles. Women's human rights often become a pawn in the global chess-game of power and pelf.

For example, at Rio + 20, the global conference to mark the 20th anniversary of the UN conferenceon environment and development during June 2012, North–South struggles over climate changeresulted in the loss of reproductive rights in the final outcome document.6

At the same time the presence of well-funded religious groups opposed to gender equality on theglobal scene and their expansion into developing countries has brought the political battles overwomen's bodily autonomy onto national, regional and global arenas (Petchesky 2003; Sen 2005;Sen and Correa 2000). Religious fundamentalist groups colluding against gender equality andwomen's human rights are located in both the North

and the South. Such fundamentalism is also associatedwith increased economic insecurity and conflict between distinct social groups shaped by race, ethnicity,caste, migrant and non-migrant status (Amin 2006; Chua 2004).

As identities harden, the fallback to conservative traditions goes hand in hand with a tendency to militate against an expansionof women's rights and the rights of other marginalized groups. Indeed, such polarization to the rightreaffirms traditional patriarchal gender roles and family relations. The dividing line thus has been thebodily autonomy and integrity central to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and hasoften placed women's rights activists between a rock and a hard place.

Nonetheless, the presence of women's organizations at all levels is central to keeping the struggle forwomen's human rights going. Women's groups are key actors for social change, vital to the advancementof the gender equality agenda, and in drawing attention to the multiple dimensions along whichwomen's rights need to be protected, promoted and advanced (Antrobus and Sen 2005; World Bank2012). For the MDGs to be transformed into a post-2015 Development Agenda that genuinely advancesgender equality, the continuing presence of and funding for women's organizations will be critical.

The fracturing and "siloization" of gender equality and the exclusion of critical women's rights have notonly narrowed the agenda but also skewed funding priorities. While funding may not automaticallytranslate into desired development and gender equality outcomes, finances are obviously a necessaryprecondition to bring goals to reality. Overseas development assistance and private aid flows havebeen directed increasingly via the public sector to education, health and family planning since thelate 1990s. However, women's rights organizations have faced shortfalls in funding, especially forissues such as reproductive and sexual health and rights.

Earlier conferences on women's rights had generated significant momentum for funding andimplementation as mandated during the Beijing conference. Proposed measures included strengtheninginstitutional mechanisms such as state agencies with women's advancement as their principal mandate,mainstreaming gender in other agencies, legal reforms and new legislation to criminalize various formsof violence, and public policies to enhance women's participation and opportunities in the economy andin political decision-making (Harcourt 2006).

Since 1995 gender mainstreaming became the dominant strategy for OECD donors, despite voiceswithin and outside pointing to limitations in its implementation (Aasen 2006). Such problems aredue to the limited technical capacity of national women's machineries, and are compounded furtherby insufficient accountability mechanisms and political commitment (Chiwara and Karadeizli 2008;Sen 2000; UN Millennium Project 2005).

Consequently, financial outlays for gender equality have not matched the lip service given toMDG 3. Studies of various donor agencies including bilateral donors illustrate how strong statementsof intention to the gender-mainstream do not translate into effective implementation in programs orresource allocation, let alone monitoring and evaluation. Further, some have argued that even whenresources for mainstreaming increased, this may have been at the expense of funding for stand-alonegender programs, although this is difficult to prove (Aasen 2006; Clark et al. 2006).7 A major challengeis to increase the share of resources for gender equality in national budgets so that they do not remainoverdependent on off-budget donor assistance.

Aid effectiveness measures bear some responsibility for the poor funding of women's empowermentprojects, women's rights organizations and gender machineries. First, new modalities such as sectorwideapproaches, basket funding and budget support have increased official development assistancegoing to developing countries, but women's organizations, even ministries or machineries for women,often lose access to assistance funding (Aasen 2006; Clark et al. 2006). Second, as aid effectiveness isadopted to improve the financing available to achieve MDGs, there have been greater flows to lowincomegovernments. Middle-income countries lose out even though aid may still be required tocounter women's human rights violations such as occupation segregation, lack of reproductive rights,or violence against women.

Finally, aid effectivenessmeasures such as country ownership present conservativestates with justification to abandon controversial issues not covered by the MDGs as a "foreignimposedagenda." To the extent that women's non-government organizations are supported, they areoften unable to take critical stances and may well be penalized for doing so (Clark et al. 2006; Duran 2012).

Although bilateral aid is the principal source of funding for gender equality projects and women'srights organizations (Alpizar et al. 2010; Clark et al. 2006; Pittman et al. 2012), these have low priorityas revealed by aid figures during 2002–2011. This is evident in the extent to which donor countries screenresources for gender priorities versus actual shares of gender focused aid in total aid. Aidvolumes increased steadily, and the share of this screened for gender equality rose from aboutone-tenth to nearly two-thirds by 2011. A major jump in screening seems tohave occurred in 2005 when the Millennium project's thematic task force on gender reaffirmed the continuedneed for financing gender equality. Nevertheless, screening for gender equality was not matchedby greater volumes of gender focused aid, which remained a very low 2–5% of all bilateral aid.

YEAR	Total sector allocable bilateral aid to developing countries (1)	Share of aid flows that were screened for the gender marker (2)	Gender-focused aid flows (secondary and principal objectives) (3)	Gender-focused aid flows (principal objective only) (4)
2002	**47.5**	**0.11**	**2.0**	**1.1**
2003	**53.7**	**0.16**	**2.7**	**1.7**
2004	**64.3**	**0.18**	**2.3**	**1.2**
2005	**67.7**	**0.46**	**3.0**	**1.8**
2006	**75.0**	**0.51**	**3.4**	**2.0**
2007	**75.4**	**0.60**	**4.2**	**3.1**
2008	**92.2**	**0.58**	**3.5**	**1.8**
2009	**92.7**	**0.65**	**4.7**	**2.2**
2010	**98.8**	**0.93**	**6.2**	**2.4**
2011	**84.8**	**0.67**	**5.0**	**2.4**

Note: All figures in constant 2010 US$ billion from the OECD-CRS online database. http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=GENDER. Accessed January 12, 2018.

Only one-half of this is towards projects with gender equality as the fundamentalobjective (Table 1, column 4). As Duran (2012) argues, funding for gender equality seems tied togender mainstreaming rather than standalone women's projects and women's organizations.Giventhe relative stability of total aid flows (Table 1, column 1), volatility of aid for women's organizationscannot be attributed to the 2001 and 2008 recessions alone. Low and inconsistent financial support forthese organizations may be the unintended consequence of narrowly defined goals, insubstantial gendermainstreaming approaches and aid effectiveness measures focused on country ownership. However, theperceptions of women's organizations and donor policies such as the US "global gag rule" point to thepossible role of conservative interests intentionally blocking resources (Clark et al. 2006).

Intentional ornot, the USA, which is one of the biggest donors with respect to total volume and share of all officialdevelopment assistance flows (Sen and Mukherje, 2014), commits far lower shares of its total aid to women'sequality organizations than all DAC donors combined.Poor financial support for women's rights organizations means poor support for the women's rightsagenda. Wherever institutional mechanisms and finances allow for gender equality advocates' participationin priority setting processes, gender priorities are integrated more effectively in developmentplans.

Similarly, technical capacity for gender analysis of macroeconomic policy, along with appropriatetargets and indicators in expenditure and results frameworks, is critical to integrate a gendered perspectivein development practice and to transform the intangible norms that buttress gender inequalities(Chiwara and Karadeizli 2008; Clark et al. 2006; Duran 2012; UN 2005). That is, gender equalitynecessarily needs consistent engagement of gender equality activists and experts, which requires institutionaland financial support.

The way forward for a Development Agenda on Women
Theline of direction proposed by the authors is that which points out targets and indicators of MDG 3 on gender equality and women's empowermentwere unable galvanize real transformation or mobilize resources effectively,given the lack of attention to the indivisibility and interdependence of women's human rights. But

howcan an interdependent agenda be translated into clear targets and indicators, with sufficient space forsubstantive civil society engagement as integral to the agenda?

One relatively simple way to do this is to focus on both people and issues. The framework proposed is one suggests the retention of goals as broad and issue-focused, but targets derived from the goal should be specific togroups of people who are disadvantaged, or marginalized. For instance, the goal of gender equalitycan remain to "Promote gender equality and empower women," but the targets can relate to particularwomen who have been historically and/or currently marginalized; for example, uneducated women in polygynous marital relationships and/or uneducated women in purdah and in polygynous marriages in Nigeria (Hussayn, 2017) and dalit and adivasi womenin India (Sen and Mukherje 2014).

Evidence on the MDGs shows that, across different goals, certain groups of people recur in theobserved achievement gaps for several targets. For instance, in Nigeria, 54% of all childrensuffered nutrition deprivation compared with the national 23%. Forty-nine percent of allhouseholds were deprived of water but more than one-half of all rural households had thisproblem (World Bank 2011; NPoC 2006). In India, dalits and adivasis are much poorer and more deprivedthan other Indians, regardless of the metric (Kabeer 2010; Sen and Mukherje 2014). Disaggregation by population groupsshows that 81% of all adivasis are poor as compared with 65.8% of dalits and one-third of allother Indians (Sen and Mukherje 2014).

Sen and Mukherje (2014) opined that people-focused targets would necessarily imply that the groups of people marginalized, at risk and atthe center of such targets would vary across regions and countries. However, national and sub-nationalidentification of groups of people should be based on transparent criteria for indicators, which are globallydetermined and consistent with human rights standards and the achievement of human development.Therefore target setting to empower chosen groups requires that multiple needs be addressedwhile cutting across issues and preventing silos.

For women, the key elements include legal empowerment;political participation and voice at multiple levels; access to and control over economic resourcesfor both income earning and managing care work; human development including safe water, sanitation,housing, health and education; and social protection again risks and vulnerabilities (Sen and Mukherje 2014).

Thus, to address the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment with a focus on poor ruralwomen, the targets would have to address women's land, inheritance and marital rights; participationand voice in local development planning; fair and adequate wages, access to productive inputs includinginfrastructure that cuts down significantly on women's time for tasks such as fetching water, fuel andfodder; literacy, education and vocational training; adequate access to healthcare, including sexual andreproductive health services; water, housing, sanitation; and maternity-related benefits that are appropriateto the informal sector. Some of these are areas in which there is ongoing work on developingindicators.

The commitments and obligations set out in the Beijing Platformfor Action, and CEDAW, and the seven strategic priorities listed by the Millennium Projectis presented below to show the level of concomitance between them.

Task Force on Gender Equality
"These interdependent priorities are the minimum necessary to empower women:
1. Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meetingcommitments to universal primary education.
2. Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights.
3. Invest in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens.
4. Guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights.
5. Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informalemployment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation.
6. Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies.
7. Combat violence against girls and women." (UN Millennium Project 2005)
Bringing these to fruition substantively across line ministries and departments will require institutionalarrangements that reflect strong political will, together with effective administrative arrangements,resources (financial and human) and adequate placement and status within nationalgovernance machineries (Kabeer and Subramanian 1999).
People-focused targets imply that people themselves are involved in determining what is to be done,and how it should be done. Such a process has the potential to address a major critique of the MDGs,namely the technocratic designing and implementation of targets and indicators. If the post-2015process is to have a stronger affirmation of human rights, it will have to place basic freedoms ofself-determination and autonomy at the heart of its agenda. How the agenda itself is set, and theextent to which people shape it, will be key.
The advantages include moving beyond issue silos; addressing people's needs directly while havingan impact on several facets of inequality; and direct involvement of people in determining what will bedone on their

behalf. These would be especially pertinent for empowering poor women, who are usuallyat the junction of several intersecting inequalities. Other advantages include retention of clear goalswhile tackling processes, participation and accountability (Sen 2013). Therefore, to bring back astrong and effective affirmation of human rights including self-determination and autonomy as integralto the post-2015 Development Agenda, focusing on people and their direct involvement in shaping theagenda can go a long way.

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