



TWO ROADS, ONE GOAL

Dual Strategy for Gender Equality Programming in the
Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund

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Cover: Children from the Dong minority of Congjiang County, Guizhou province in southwestern China. (Photo: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

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FOREWORD

The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) was created with the support of the Government of Spain, continuing the history of multi-lateral cooperation. In December 2012, the Cabinet of Spain approved the fourth Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation for 2013–2016, contextualizing it in the international development agenda, including the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and the new post-2015 development agenda. The plan also addressed the challenges of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the European Union agenda for change and G20 development agreements.

In this context, women's rights and the integration of a gender perspective are the hallmarks of Spanish cooperation, thus strengthening the commitment that began with the approval of Law 23/1998 on international cooperation and subsequent development plans.

In a particularly difficult time for the international community, Spain is committed to contributing to human development, assisting in poverty eradication and promoting the full realization of human rights, while strengthening the integration of gender-specific programmes and, when necessary, continuing to support existing programmes serving specific groups of women.

This explains the work performed under the MDG-F Gender Thematic Window, which involved an investment of \$90 million, and the efforts to integrate gender concerns across the Fund's other thematic windows, with lessons learned for consolidating this work in the future. Promoting a dual strategy to ensure access to rights and freedoms for all women also represents Spain's commitment to multilateral cooperation for development.

Gonzalo Robles
Secretary-General of International
Development Cooperation, Spain



Egyptian communities that live near Egypt's Dahshur pyramids benefit from an MDG-F joint programme that combines cultural preservation with improving livelihoods and working conditions in local creative industries, which particularly employ women and young people.



PREFACE

Established through a landmark agreement between the Government of Spain and the United Nations with the aim of accelerating development progress, the MDG Achievement Fund has leveraged the collective strength of the United Nations system and its partners to support national efforts toward achieving the MDGs. Causes of the multi-dimensional development challenges such efforts seek to address are rooted in the power relations, attitudes, beliefs and social norms that characterize countries and preclude some citizens from asserting their fundamental human rights. Gender-based discrimination, at the heart of this rights denial in many countries, results in profound socioeconomic inequalities and curtails the tremendous potential of the world's women and girls.

The MDG-F joint programme design and implementation model exemplifies the Fund's approach to addressing gender-related inequalities by factoring in their fundamental causes and prioritizing concrete interventions to empower the most excluded and vulnerable. *Two Roads, One Goal* details the dual MDG-F gender-equality strategy that stems from international commitments: a portfolio of 13 targeted joint programmes that promote gender equality as a central goal, and a gender-mainstreaming effort within 117 MDG-F joint programmes targeting other development areas—in line with its commitment to gender equality as a prerequisite for achieving all MDGs.

As part of an ongoing knowledge-management effort, MDG-F sought to identify the key successes and challenges of this dual gender equality strategy. The Fund partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to collaboratively assess key achievements and lessons, with UNDP reviewing the results of gender-targeted MDG-F programmes and UN Women focusing on gender mainstreaming in programmes funded through other thematic windows. By applying performance indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment, endorsed by the United Nations Development Group, interviewing programme teams and stakeholders, conducting in-depth research and desk review, and analysing the findings, the two teams examined the extent to which MDG-F joint programmes supported policies and interventions with impacts on the MDGs, developed successful and innovative models for scale-up, and ensured aid effectiveness.

Two Roads, One Goal presents the initial findings of the UNDP and UN Women's analyses, which endeavour to inform current debate on international development frameworks and the post-2015 agenda. The publication also presents the largest-to-date study that examines the effectiveness of combining targeted and gender-mainstreaming interventions to promote gender equality through a joint programming modality. The MDG-F Secretariat and its UNDP and UN Women colleagues hope that the findings and recommendations presented in the following pages can substantively contribute to propelling accountability and coherence of the United Nations effort to promote gender equality through joint programming.

MDG Achievement Fund Secretariat



The Leave No Woman Behind joint programme provided women with loans and training in literacy and business skills, boosting women's self-esteem and changing gender relations in households.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) commitment to gender equality builds on more than two decades of knowledge, experience and internationally accepted norms, standards and conventions. Based on the priorities established in 1995 at the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the MDG-F adopted a dual strategy for achieving gender equality that supported both targeted gender programming and gender mainstreaming as a part of its overall funding portfolio.

MDG-F allocated \$90 million to 13 programmes under the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Window. The Fund also provided its seven other thematic windows with detailed gender-mainstreaming guidance, based on United Nations Development Group's (UNDG) guidance for gender-responsive joint programmes.

As part of its overall knowledge-management efforts, MDG-F assessed the successes and challenges in the application of this dual strategy by working with two UN-system partners: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). UNDP reviewed the Gender Thematic Window portfolio, while UN Women analysed gender mainstreaming across other MDG-F thematic areas. This publication synthesizes both reviews and aims to demonstrate the interrelated and complementary nature of targeted and cross-cutting interventions and the added development value of a dual strategy.

Gender-targeted programmes: An overview of the Gender Thematic Window

The UNDP-conducted review demonstrated that the 13 joint programmes under the Gender Thematic Window **incorporated interdisciplinary and multisectoral approaches** that facilitated holistic responses to the complex social and cultural dynamics that perpetuate gender-based inequalities. This involved combining strategies; for example, programmes that addressed gender-based violence by promoting legislative action also partnered with non-governmental organizations to help survivors of violence access productive resources—and with the media to raise awareness of women's human rights. Work also entailed partnering with countries' finance and planning ministries and national statistics offices to create or improve existing data collection and dissemination methods and, in turn, support future policy development, planning and implementation with sex-disaggregated data.

Many joint programmes **addressed inequalities and discriminatory practices across multiple sectors**, facilitating national-level work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by ensuring the inclusion of women—particularly those living among the world's most vulnerable groups—as not only project beneficiaries but as key agents of change.

The review found that all joint programmes **experienced challenges** and attempted to learn from them. In some cases, programmes made innovative corrections and achieved both planned and unanticipated positive results. Joint gender

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