In this chapter, Michelle Bachelet emphasises that to be effective, development must embrace the goals of gender equality, social justice, peace and prosperity. She highlights the contribution that official development assistance (ODA) has made to empowering women and girls to exercise their rights fully, as equal citizens. Partnerships on gender equality between the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have also played a fundamental role in ensuring enhanced support to and impact on gender equality goals, particularly as the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) approaches. Nonetheless, pervasive under-investment by donors, among other reasons, has led countries to lag behind on gender equality commitments.

This chapter makes recommendations on how to remove the barriers that prevent women from realising their full potential, and enable the achievement of gender-equitable development results.
As the OECD marks its 50th anniversary, it has much to celebrate. Official development assistance (ODA) has made significant contributions to reducing poverty and advancing health, education and infrastructure development in almost all developing countries. In some cases, ODA has been the major source of support for achieving these development goals. And in these success stories, effective partnership between the United Nations (UN) system and OECD members has been instrumental.

As the first leader of UN Women, the new UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, I am keenly aware of the contribution ODA has made in supporting countries’ efforts to advance gender equality. ODA financial resources are an essential support for the provision of services and information, which empower women and girls to exercise their rights fully, as equal citizens. And what is equally important, by underpinning technical and policy assistance, ODA strengthens the capacities of national governments and civil society to put in place systems that enable them to plan, budget, implement and monitor progress towards development results.

To respond to the development and human security challenges of the 21st century, OECD members and their partners have agreed on a development assistance approach based on the principles of national ownership and mutual accountability among all development partners, rather than simply between aid recipients and donors. These efforts are based on the principles outlined in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which were given added impetus at the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, Ghana (2008), through the Accra Agenda for Action.

The initial vision and action plan I designed for UN Women, which was presented at the time of the organisation’s launch in January 2011, aligns well with many of these principles and practices. The action plan outlines the principles that guide UN Women’s work and identifies the programmatic areas that we, together with the UN system, will focus on. It also defines UN Women’s leadership role in ensuring a more co-ordinated UN response to member states’ priorities and to their need to advance gender equality at the country, regional and global levels.

UN Women’s five programmatic priorities are: i) empowering women economically; ii) ensuring women’s political participation and leadership; iii) ending violence against women and girls; iv) increasing women’s leadership in peace and security and v) strengthening national development planning and budgeting to promote gender equality.

A measure of UN Women’s effectiveness will be the extent to which it generates a more effective and strategic UN system response to countries’ demands for support in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. The UN system must work together in a more co-ordinated and systematic way to become not only more efficient, more focused and more comprehensive – bringing together knowledge and expertise from UN agencies, governments, civil society, foundations and the private sector to tackle challenges holistically – but also more powerful, working from all angles to build momentum for change. This delivering-as-one UN approach will provide us with valuable lessons and models.
At the same time, the UN’s institutional partnership with the OECD on gender equality – which regularly brings together the members of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and those of the OECD Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) – will be fundamental in ensuring that our organisations are working together to enhance our support and impact, particularly as we approach the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Thanks to the efforts of GENDERNET, members of the OECD DAC have adopted a number of important guidelines on gender equality and development co-operation. The OECD DAC has also pioneered efforts to monitor financing for gender equality through the gender equality policy marker, which has been periodically refined to respond to identified gaps and areas for improvement. I see great value in all of this work. Several UN organisations are now building on the experience with the OECD DAC gender marker and adapting it for their own internal operations. UN Women will work towards a system-wide approach to marking funds so that the UN, as a whole, can account for its investments in women and girls.

Despite this progress, however, we still have a long road to travel. Because of pervasive under-investment, among other reasons, we are still lagging far behind on important gender equality indicators.

Why are development results for women and girls elusive?

Development, to be effective, must embrace the goals of gender equality, social justice, peace and prosperity. The UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2011, which represents the latest UN inter-agency research and analysis, shows that:

- In 2009, the number of girls not in primary school was 36 million, compared to 31 million boys.
- Since 1990, the decrease in the number of maternal deaths has been just 2.3% per year. The World Health Organization’s latest estimates show that based on current trends, only 14 countries will succeed in reducing maternal mortality by three quarters by 2015.
This and other UN reports have unpacked available data to check for other disparities. Among their findings:

- The share of girls who are not attending primary school in rural areas is more than twice that in urban areas.
- Women from poor households are three times less likely to have a skilled birth attendant – a key factor in reducing maternal mortality – than those from wealthy households.
- The child mortality rate for women with little or no formal education is more than twice that for those with secondary education or higher.

In analysing these disparities, UN Women concluded that inequalities in access to services – both among women and between women and men – are holding back progress on the MDGs, especially in health and education. In particular, poor and rural women and girls who rely most on public services are often left behind. In many countries, simply living in a rural area, where poverty rates are higher and access to services and markets are lower, is an indicator of disadvantage. Even though some countries have reached gender parity in education, girls in rural areas continue to miss out, especially in the poorest countries.

A number of studies have demonstrated the costs of gender discrimination and exclusion. One of the most dramatic illustrations relates to violence against women, the costs of which in terms of health impacts and workplace productivity are immense. In the United States, for example, these costs reach an estimated USD 5.8 billion each year, while in Canada – with its smaller population and lower health costs – the total cost is an estimated USD 1.16 billion (UN 2006).

Data like these indicate the need to review development interventions with a view to determining which ones have persistently left women in certain sectors at a disadvantage and to increasing resources for interventions that have been shown to produce more equitable results. For example, while rural women make up the majority of small-scale farmers and play a crucial role in food security in developing countries, agricultural extension services continue to focus on male landholders as their primary targets; in many contexts, women’s access to these services is even excluded or restricted by design or omission.

Whilst donor policies may often mention women farmers, the donor funding streams have not matched these policy commitments. OECD DAC statistics show that in 2008-09, DAC members committed USD 7.5 billion to the agriculture and rural development sectors. Screened against the gender equality policy marker, 3% of the total was allocated to programmes in which gender equality was a primary aim, and 32% was allocated to programmes in which gender equality was a secondary aim. Among aid to the actual inputs needed to perform agricultural work (such as equipment, machinery, seeds), only 5% specifically had gender equality as its aim (OECD 2011).
Measures such as gender-responsive land reforms have been shown to work. In Tajikistan, for instance, these reforms – combined with legal assistance, training and support for women’s co-operatives – increased the proportion of women heading family farms from 2% to 14% (UNIFEM 2010a). In its latest report, The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11, which focuses on gender equality, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) notes that closing the gender gap in agriculture and especially addressing yield and productivity gaps between men and women, would reduce the number of under-nourished people by 12-17%. This translates into 100 to 150 million fewer people living in hunger (FAO 2011). These figures point to the need for OECD and partner countries not only to find ways to translate gender equality goals into results, but also to ensure greater coherence among policies for social development, policies that address economic development (including trade and employment) and post-crisis or post-conflict recovery policies.

From policy statements to concrete action: The example of Chile

Effective results are possible. Many countries are already on track to provide comprehensive solutions that will remove the barriers preventing women from realising their full potential, thereby enabling the achievement of economic and social development goals. My experience as President of Chile enabled me to provide evidence of the value of linking social development policies more closely to economic development.

After its return to democracy, Chile had both the political consensus and the economic strength needed to enable it to become the modern, prosperous, stable and inclusive society desired by both men and women. During my presidency, we introduced a number of gender-responsive social policies, taking into account women’s needs but also acknowledging that such policies would be beneficial for families and society as a whole.

One of the most important of these policies was a pension reform, a cornerstone of the country’s social safety net that ensured low-income men and women a dignified and financially secure old age. Women were among the greatest beneficiaries: towards the end of 2009, 65% of pensions went to women – not only to those who had been paid employees, but also to those who had worked at home and never received wages. Today, as far as money is concerned, these women will have something to show for the hard work they have done throughout their lives.

Recognising the role of service provision in advancing social and gender equality, my government provided an extensive network of education and child-care centres, especially for poor households. During my term in office, the network increased from 705 free centres in 2005 to 3 500 such centres at the end of 2009. Women could work or look for work with the assurance that their children were studying, receiving good nutrition and thriving. From 2000 to 2009, the rate of women’s participation in the labour force increased by more than five percentage points, reaching 41.8%.

“... closing the gender gap in agriculture, and especially addressing yield and productivity gaps between men and women, would reduce the number of under-nourished people by 12-17%.”
We also introduced a number of employment-related measures designed to strengthen women’s economic autonomy, including job training programmes particularly for women heads of household, subsidies to employers to encourage them to hire women and the promulgation of an equal-pay law. In the first year of my administration, we put in place a Code of Good Labour Practices for public administration, which set guidelines for ensuring gender equality.

To address the problem of domestic violence, we invested in more women’s centres providing care and preventive services, including 61 new centres located in areas near the women who need them most. We amended the Penal Code, recognising the murder of a woman as a crime of the most serious nature and increasing the prison sentences for such a crime. And we supported 33 intake units for victims of violence, providing specialised medical care at better-equipped hospitals.

We also undertook major reforms in the educational system, creating a modern institutional framework with financial subsidies for poor students. Looking to the future, we decided to take a leap in terms of science, technology and innovation by investing in human capital through two new funds: Innovation for Competitiveness and the Bicentennial Fund for Human Capital.

In response to the economic downturn that resulted from the worst global financial crisis in recent times, we sought to stimulate economic recovery through an Extraordinary Fiscal Expenditure Plan amounting to USD 4 billion, financed with the savings accumulated through the Economic and Social Stabilisation Fund. This plan enabled us to develop projects to boost the economy and create jobs while protecting social spending, especially spending that targeted low-income families and those headed by women. In fact, all of the recovery measures had a “gender focus”: housing subsidies prioritised women heads of household, for example, while public health support provided free baby supplies to mothers enrolled in the public health system.

All of these measures were possible because we had a strong economy as well as the political consensus needed to exercise responsible leadership. While not all countries may be so fortunate, it is important that donors support governments in taking the measures needed to ensure nationally owned and inclusive development.

Three key measures for gender equity

Systems for managing development assistance and national development play an important role in enabling approaches such as those outlined above. The OECD, its individual members and its national partners can ensure that these systems integrate three key measures to achieve gender-equitable development results:

Measure 1: Create incentives for integrating gender equality perspectives into development assistance.

To enhance institutional, programme and individual performance on gender equality, incentive systems are fundamental. Where evaluation and performance reviews indicate gaps in relation to gender mainstreaming, corrective measures need to be taken to support capacity and address these gaps. At present, OECD DAC guidelines lack incentives to promote compliance, nor are there implications resulting from failure to comply (Molyneux 2007).
Measure 2: Promote investment in building capacity to identify, implement and monitor effective strategies.

The application of the gender marker provides some interesting data on the amount of attention assigned to gender issues in the “hard” sectors such as energy or transport, as opposed to the so-called “soft” sectors such as education and health. Even in post-conflict contexts, while more than half of ODA to the education and health sectors targets gender equality outcomes, there is little evidence of significant resources being targeted to gender equality in other sectors. This suggests that there is a lack of understanding of the gender-differentiated impacts of financing for infrastructure, security, economic opportunity, energy, transport and productive sectors such as agriculture or industry.

The capacity to fully mainstream gender equality priorities in development frameworks requires more than guidelines and checklists; it requires a fuller understanding of the transformations that are needed in systems, institutions and approaches, and more effective engagement of economic analysts and policy makers along with gender equality experts in efforts to bring these transformations about.

Measure 3: Increase gender-focused development assistance.

If countries are to achieve the advances in gender equality and women’s empowerment needed to accelerate progress on the MDGs, investment in gender equality goals – both as principal and as secondary objectives – must be greatly increased. This can be achieved by instituting gender equality financing mechanisms such as basket funds, or by expanding funding windows that specifically respond to women’s priorities.

Development financing can support affirmative action to promote gender equality, including paying more attention to putting women at the front line of service delivery. Evidence suggests that this can positively influence the extent to which women receive the benefits of development. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the presence of female teachers correlates with higher levels of girls’ enrolment in primary school. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, a study of agricultural programmes found that the presence of female extension agents was important in promoting the participation of female farmers. Data from 40 countries show that women’s representation in the police correlates positively with increased rates of reporting sexual violence (UN Women 2011).

Looking ahead

The political vision that drives development planning and implementation needs to embrace the centrality of gender equality. UN Women looks forward to the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, on 29 November-1 December 2011, as an opportunity to set a roadmap for meeting long-standing challenges to the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Together with the UN, other development partners and women’s rights networks, we are working to ensure that the outcome of this forum will not only offer a political affirmation of the centrality of gender equality to nationally owned development planning and budgeting, but also acknowledge the limitations of the current mainstreaming approaches that keep gender equality concerns at the margins.
A post-2015 agenda requires a concerted effort by governments and other national stakeholders, OECD members and the UN system to promote a discourse on development that acknowledges the shortcomings of past experiences and places the goal of gender-equitable and inclusive development at the heart of the aid effectiveness agenda.

In its first strategic plan, UN Women has identified what is required to ensure gender-sensitive national development plans and budgets, as well as the steps needed to ensure the inclusion of women and women’s perspectives in the definition of a framework to guide national development planning beyond the MDGs. The OECD DAC is in a position to build on its past experience and utilise its leadership to articulate a coherent and comprehensive framework for effective development assistance for a post-MDG era.

UN Women looks forward to an effective partnership with the OECD DAC to shape this vision for the future and to translate it into action with concrete results at the country level.
Notes

1. The DAC Creditor Reporting System provides the following guidelines: principal (primary) policy objectives are those which can be identified as being fundamental in the design and impact of the activity and which are an explicit objective of the activity. They may be selected by answering the question: “Would the activity have been undertaken without this objective?” Significant (secondary) policy objectives are those which, although important, are not one of the principal reasons for undertaking the activity. The score not targeted means that the activity has been screened against, but was found not to be targeted to, the policy objective. This figure shows gender equality targeting in the health, education and economic/productive sectors. Aid to banking, business, agriculture, transport and other areas of economic empowerment has an overall lower focus on gender equality (19%) than the education (56%) and health (50%) sectors. Thirty-one percent of all sector-allocable aid targets the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.
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