



HOUSE OF LORDS

# Library Note

## **Debate on 27 June: the Challenges Faced by Women in Developing Countries**

This Library Note provides background reading for the debate to be held on Thursday 27 June on:

“the challenges faced by women across the globe, particularly those in developing countries”

This Library Note focuses on the challenges faced by women in the developing world, and the action which is being taken by the UK Government, international governments and multilateral aid organisations to address these challenges. It will briefly consider the significance of gender within the field of international development, and will then go on to summarise some of the key research and statistics on the position of women in the developing world, focusing on four areas: education, employment, health, and violence against women.

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## 1. Introduction

Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General, has suggested that:

There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health—including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. And I would also venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended.

(Kofi Annan, '[Keynote Address](#)', International Women's Health Coalition Gala, 15 January 2004)

This Library Note will consider the challenges faced by women in the developing world, and the action which is being taken by the UK Government, international governments and multilateral aid organisations to address these challenges. It will briefly consider the significance of gender within the field of international development, and will then go on to summarise some of the key research and statistics on the position of women in the developing world, focusing on four areas: education, employment, health, and violence against women.

## 2. Gender and International Development

A report published by the Institute of Development Studies suggests that:

Advocacy within the field of gender and development has been broadly summarised under two sets of arguments. The first set of arguments points to the adverse implications of gender inequality in the distribution of valued resources and opportunities for women's well-being, agency and human rights. It argues for gender equality on intrinsic grounds, as a valued goal in itself, an essential aspect of human dignity and social justice ('the right thing to do'). The second set offers an instrumental rationale which rests on well-documented evidence that increasing gender equality in valued resources and opportunities is an effective means to the achievement of other development goals ('the smart thing to do').

(Naila Kabeer and Luisa Natali, [Gender Equality and Economic Growth: Is there a Win-Win?](#), IDS, February 2013, p 6)

This report's authors consider the history of how gender became a discrete subject within the theory of international development, outlining some of the schools of thought on this subject. A report published by the Department for International Development also provides an 'Outline History of Women, Gender and Development' (DfID, [Gender Manual: A Practical Guide for Development Policy Makers and Practitioners](#), 2002, pp 7–9).

It is also possible to identify several key moments in the development of an international political consensus on the importance of gender for development. In 1945, the Charter of the United Nations was the first international agreement to declare gender equality a human right. In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the UN describes this document as "an international

bill of rights for women”. Signatories pledge to establish a legal system in which men and woman are equal, and discrimination against women is prohibited (UN website, [‘Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women’](#)). In 1995, the Beijing Conference on Women adopted a Declaration and Platform for Action for women’s rights (UN Women, [‘Fourth World Conference on Women’](#), September 1995). In September 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the [United Nations Millennium Declaration](#), setting out eight Millennium Development Goals, and 18 targets, which they aimed to meet by 2015. The third Millennium Development Goal, MDG 3, is to “promote gender equality and empower women”; there is one target associated with this goal, to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015”. The three indicators which are used to measure whether the goal has been met are:

- ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Another MDG focuses on the wellbeing of women; MDG 5 is to “improve maternal health”. The targets associated with this goal focus on maternal mortality and reproductive health (UN Statistics Division website, [‘Official List of MDG Indicators’](#), January 2008).

The UN measures progress against the MDGs in an annual report; the most recent is [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#) (UN, June 2012). The evidence associated with each goal for women will be discussed in the relevant sections below. A report published by the OECD measures the Official Development Assistance (ODA) which the 26 countries who are members of the [Development Assistance Committee](#) provide for “aid in support of gender equality and women’s empowerment” between 2002 and 2011: [Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment—Donor Charts](#) (OECD, March 2013).

Another OECD report considers UK spending on ODA in more detail; this suggests that:

The United Kingdom has taken a lead role in integrating gender equality perspectives into international commitments for more effective aid. ODA commitments for activities with gender equality as a principal or significant objective peaked in 2009, reaching USD 3.29 billion. The momentum, however, needs to be sustained, as 2010 saw a sharp decrease in allocations reported for such activities, down to USD 931 million.

(OECD, [‘United Kingdom’](#), *Development Co-operation Report 2012*, 13 November 2012, p 239)

The Gender and Development Network has published a report which provides information on the policies of the current Coalition Government and the previous Labour Government, on gender and development: [DfID’s Strategic Vision For Girls And Women: A Move In The Right Direction?](#) (May 2012). This states that “DfID’s first gender policy document” *Poverty Elimination and the Empowerment of Women*, was published in 2000 and “stressed the importance of women’s rights beyond supporting women as a means to reduce poverty”. In 2006 DfID published an [Evaluation of DfID’s Policy and Practice in Support of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment](#). This review concluded that “DfID has made important contributions to gender equality through both policy and practice. However, this contribution is uneven, and varies across sectors”. In response to this review, DfID developed a three year Gender Equality Action Plan, introducing reporting requirements on gender for DfID country offices, pay incentives known as the ‘Gender Bonus Scheme’, and new members of staff known as Gender

Champions. The current Government has not continued the Gender Equality Action Plan system. In 2010, the Government published a review of this system, which includes ‘lessons learned and recommendations’ (DfID, [Gender Equality Action Plan \(GEAP\) Light Touch Review](#), 2010).

The current Government has made a number of commitments on aid for women in the developing world. In 2010, DfID published a Business Plan, which stated that one of the Coalition’s six priorities was to “Lead international action to improve the lives of girls and women” ([DfID Business Plan 2011–2015](#), 8 November 2010, p 3). In 2011, the Department for International Development published [A New Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: Stopping Poverty Before It Starts](#) (8 March 2011). This set out four “pillars for action”, which will be discussed in more detail below. DfID published a progress report in 2012: [Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: One Year On](#) (17 August 2012). The Government has also made a number of more recent commitments on women in the developing world. In July 2012, the Government pledged to increase aid for family planning. On 4 March 2013, the Secretary of State made a speech at Amnesty UK, [‘A New Focus on Girls and Women’s Rights’](#), in which she said that it was necessary for the UK to “be more ambitious” in “empowering girls and women” in the developing world. Justine Greening, the Secretary of State for International Development, pledged the Government’s support for several new projects, including research on employment and violence against women (DfID press release, [‘Girls & Women: UK Steps Up Support for Women’s Rights’](#), 8 March 2013).

Discussions are currently underway on the new goals which should be put in place to replace the MDGs in 2015. Information on this subject is available in a House of Lords Library Note [Debate on 22 November: Successor Framework to the Millennium Development Goals](#) (19 November 2012, LLN 2012/039). On 30 May 2013, the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, chaired by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, published a report, [A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty And Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development](#). The report contained a set of “Illustrative Goals and Targets”, which include a stand-alone gender goal seeking to “Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality”. The Government has expressed its support for a new goal on gender (HC *Hansard*, 21 March 2013, [col 374VWH](#)) as has the Select Committee on International Development, which published a report in January 2013, advising that women’s rights should be “explicitly set out in quantitative detail” in the Post-2015 goals, and recommending that data used in the Framework should be disaggregated by gender (International Development Select Committee, [The Post-2015 Development Goals](#), HC paper 657 of session 2010–12, 22 January 2013).

### 3. Education

In developing countries, progress against the target associated with MDG 3, ‘Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015’, has been pronounced “lagging” (DfID, [Department for International Development Annual Report and Accounts 2011–12](#), 2012, p 18). A report published by the UN provides the following summary of the progress which has been made:

Globally, the number of primary-age children not enrolled in primary or secondary education dropped from 108 million to 61 million between 1999 and 2010. Gender parity in primary schooling worldwide has officially been achieved. At the regional and national levels, however, gender disparities persist. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest rate of girls out of primary school, 26 percent.

... Advances in secondary attendance are less encouraging than at the primary level. Globally, net attendance rates have increased by about 10 percentage points since the 1990s, to 36 percent, with progress evenly distributed between rich and poor, girls and boys alike. The gender gap consequently remained relatively narrow, at less than five per cent. At the regional level, the much larger attendance gaps of over 30 percent between rich and poor girls and between rich and poor boys have barely changed in most regions.

(UN Women, [The Millennium Development Goals Report Gender Chart 2012](#), December 2012, pp 3–4)

Another UN report seeks to explain these statistics:

Gender disparities in secondary education emerge from gender-based discrimination in the family and in the society in general. Secondary schooling is more costly than primary education, and households are often forced to ration resources among children. Where girls' education is less valued, or is perceived as generating lower returns, parents may favour sons over daughters. Early marriage can act as another barrier to secondary school progression. Parents may also worry more about the security of adolescent girls because secondary schools are often farther from home than primary schools.

(UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#), June 2012, p 21)

This report adds that, in tertiary education, parity has been reached across the developing world, with an equal number of men and women participating in tertiary education. It suggests that a high level of parity occurs in Latin America and the Caribbean, South-Eastern Asia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Northern Africa and Eastern Asia, whereas lower levels of parity persist in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Western Asia. The report suggests that “countries with lower levels of national wealth tend to have more men enrolled in tertiary education than women, while the opposite occurs in countries with higher average income”. (UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#), June 2012, p 21). The same report offers figures on literacy, stating that: “In 2010, there were still 122 million people between 15 and 24 years of age—74 million women and 48 million men—who were unable to read and write a short, simple statement about their everyday life” (UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#), June 2012, p 19).

An article published in the IMF journal *Finance & Development* provides a number of case studies on how to improve the attendance of girls at schools in the developing world. It suggests:

To shrink education gaps in countries where they persist, barriers to access because of poverty, ethnicity, or geography must come down. For example, where distance is the key problem (as in rural areas of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan), more schools in remote areas can reduce the gender gap. When customised solutions are hard to implement or too costly, demand-side interventions, such as cash transfers conditioned on school attendance, can help get girls from poor families to school. Such conditional cash transfers have succeeded in increasing girls' enrolment rates in countries as diverse as Mexico, Turkey, and Pakistan.

(Ana Revenga and Sudhir Shetty, [‘Empowering Women Is Smart Economics’](#), *Finance & Development*, March 2012)



One of the “four pillars of action” which the Government identified in the 2011 document [A New Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: Stopping Poverty Before It Starts](#) (8 March 2011) is “getting girls through secondary school”. The document states:

DfID will be supporting over 9 million children in primary school by 2014, of which at least half will be girls. Our focus will be on girls completing primary education, with good learning achievement, so they have an opportunity to progress to secondary level. By 2014, we will be supporting 700,000 girls in secondary education. We are looking at what more we can do to support girls to get into school and improve their learning.

(DfID, [A New Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: Stopping Poverty Before It Starts](#), 8 March 2011, p 3)

A large body of literature exists on the link between women’s education and other development goals. Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, recently suggested that it was necessary to support the education of girls in developing countries because:

An extra year of primary schooling for girls increases their wages by up to 20 percent and for secondary school it’s even higher. More time in education means that girls face a lower risk of sexual violence, they marry later, have fewer children, and have better health outcomes for the children they do have. It’s better for them and their families and communities.

(Justine Greening, [‘A New Focus on Girls and Women’s Rights’](#), speech at Amnesty UK, 4 March 2013)

A report published in 2010 by Chatham House considers the economic benefits which accrue to countries in which women have improved access to education:

Better-educated women can undertake higher-value economic activity. Countries are rarely wealthy if they have poor gender equality in education. With the exceptions of resource-rich Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, no country has achieved both GDP per capita of over \$10,000 and a ratio of girls to boys in primary education of less than 90 percent... Estimates of the loss of growth owing to gender inequality in education range from 0.38 percent per annum in sub-Saharan Africa to 0.81 percent per annum in South Asia.

(Simon Baptist et al, [Evidence for Action: Gender Equality and Economic Growth](#), Chatham House, September 2010, p viii)

This report goes on to suggest that:

Better-educated girls and women are likely to have fewer children. The decline in fertility associated with greater gender equality can have profound economic impacts. A fall in fertility leads to a lower dependency ratio and tends to increase per capita output, providing a ‘demographic dividend’. This may have accounted for as much as one-third of the strong economic growth rate in East Asia since the late 1970s.

(Simon Baptist et al, [Evidence for Action: Gender Equality and Economic Growth](#), Chatham House, September 2010, p ix)

There is also evidence of health benefits associated with education. A report published by the Council on Foreign Relations contains a literature review looking at the evidence on the link between the education of women in developing countries and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. It suggests that “a 72-country analysis finds that where the literacy gap between boys and girls exceeds 25 percent, HIV prevalence exceeds 5 percent—the cited outbreak level. Conversely, HIV prevalence falls below 3 percent where the literacy gap is below 5 percent”, while “young rural Ugandans with secondary education are three times less likely than those with no education to be HIV positive” (Council on Foreign Relations, [What Works in Girls' Education](#), 2004, p 5). The report suggests that, “lacking a vaccine for the virus or a cure for the disease, education is the single best way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS” (Council on Foreign Relations, [What Works in Girls' Education](#), 2004, p 31).

Research published in the journal *BMC Public Health* considers the impact of education on maternal health, finding that: “Lower levels of maternal education were associated with higher maternal mortality even amongst women able to access facilities providing intrapartum care... women with no education had 2.7 times the risk of maternal mortality of women with more than 12 years of education” (Dinorah L Calles et al, [The Relationship between Maternal Education and Mortality among Women giving Birth in Health Care Institutions](#), *BMC Public Health*, 2011). The charity Plan UK has suggested that, if a girl stays in education, she is less likely to marry young, stating “girls tend to drop out of school shortly before or when they get married” ([Early and Forced Marriage—Facts, Figures and What you can do](#)). According to a report published by the UN, “Early marriage has an important bearing on women’s autonomy and reproductive health. Girls who marry young are exposed to the risks of early pregnancy and childbirth” (UN Women, [The Millennium Development Goals Report Gender Chart 2012](#), December 2012, p 6). The risks associated with early childbirth are discussed below in the section on health.

It appears that education offers health benefits, not only for the women concerned, but for their children. UN research suggests that:

Educational attainment of mothers is a strong determinant of under-five survival. In Latin America and the Caribbean children of mothers with primary education are one and a half times more likely to survive than children whose mothers have no education. The chances of survival more than double when mothers have secondary education.

(UN Women, [The Millennium Development Goals Report Gender Chart 2012](#), December 2012, p 5)

A study published in 1993 suggested that an extra year of girls’ education could reduce infant mortality by 5–10 percent (Paul Schultz, ‘Returns to Women’s Schooling’, in *Women’s Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits, and Policy*, 1993). A study published in 1997 suggests that part of this result may be accounted for by the increased likelihood of inoculation: “Multicountry data show that educated mothers are about 50 percent more likely to immunise their children than are uneducated mothers... While part of this effect is accounted for by household incomes, maternal education strongly predicts immunisation rates even in comparable households” (Anastasia Gage et al, [Household Structure and Childhood Immunisation in Niger and Nigeria](#), *Demography*, 1997).

## 4. Health

MDG 5 is to “improve maternal health”. Progress against the target associated with MDG 5, ‘Reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters’ has been described as “lagging” (DfID, [Department for International Development Annual Report and Accounts 2011–12](#), 2012, p 19). A UN report offers the following data:

An estimated 287,000 maternal deaths occurred in 2010 worldwide, a decline of 47 percent from 1990. Sub-Saharan Africa (with 56 percent of these deaths) and Southern Asia (29 percent) together accounted for 85 percent of the global burden in 2010, with 245,000 maternal deaths between them.

(UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#), June 2012, p 31)

This report adds that the maternal mortality ratio, the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, is 15 times higher in developing countries than in developed countries. The presence of a skilled health worker (a doctor, nurse or midwife) significantly increases the chance of maternal survival. The UN report states that:

In developing regions overall, the proportion of deliveries attended by skilled health personnel rose from 55 percent in 1990 to 65 percent in 2010. The regions with the highest maternal mortality, sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, are also those with the lowest coverage of births attended by skilled health personnel— less than half.

(UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#), June 2012, p 33)

It is also notable that women in the developing world are more at risk if they give birth at a young age. A report published by the World Health Organisation suggests that: “First pregnancy at an early age is risky. In low- and middle income countries, complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death in women aged 15–19 years” (WHO, [Early Marriages, Adolescent And Young Pregnancies](#), 16 March 2012, p 3). Worldwide, it has been suggested that girls aged 10–14 are five times more likely than women aged 20–24 to die in pregnancy or childbirth (Neal S et al, [White Ribbon Alliance Atlas of Birth](#), White Ribbon Alliance, 2010). A UN report comments on the incidence of teenage pregnancy in developing countries:

In all developing regions, the number of births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 years decreased between 1990 and 2000. Since that time, the rate of decline has slowed or even reversed in most regions. In countries where marriage at a young age is relatively common, developing and implementing culturally sensitive programmes to delay the age at marriage and enacting and enforcing laws concerning a minimum age for marriage could assist in further reducing adolescent childbearing.

(UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#), June 2012, p 34)

The Government has pledged to improve maternal mortality in developing countries; the 2011 document [A New Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: Stopping Poverty Before It Starts](#) (8 March 2011) states that:

More than 17 DfID country offices are scaling up programming in this area, with a growing number focusing on girls, and on early marriage and pregnancy. As a result of these measures, we will help to save the lives of at least 50,000 women during

pregnancy and childbirth, enable 10 million more women to access family planning (of which 1 million will be girls aged 15–19) and support 2 million births with skilled attendants.

(DfID, [A New Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: Stopping Poverty Before It Starts](#), 8 March 2011, p 2)

The House of Lords recently debated a Question for Short Debate initiated by Lord Crisp, who asked the Government “what action they will take to promote skills mix changes and task sharing in low- and middle-income countries in order to improve quality, access and cost in health services, in line with the report of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health *All the Talents*” (HL *Hansard*, 25 March 2013, [col GC217](#)). Baroness Northover, Lead Spokesperson for DfID in the House of Lords, responded to say that she welcomed the report, and highlighted the Government’s work in this area:

We have promised to save the lives of at least 50,000 women during pregnancy and childbirth. We have promised to support 2 million women to deliver their babies safely with the support of skilled midwives, nurses and doctors... Meeting these commitments means improvements across the health systems in developing countries but, above all, demands skilled health workers across all levels of the workforce. We strongly agree with the noble Lord, Lord Crisp. We are supporting the workforce in 28 of the countries in which we work. This includes training new health workers, building skills among existing health workers and supporting government planning.

(HL *Hansard*, 25 March 2013, [col GC228](#))

The Government has recently announced that aid for South Africa will cease in 2015 (DfID Press Release, [‘UK to End Direct Financial Support to South Africa’](#), 30 April 2013). Critics of this decision have suggested that high rates of maternal mortality in South Africa mean that UK aid should continue, for example: [‘Assessing the End of the UK’s Aid to South Africa’](#) (*The Lancet*, 11 May 2013); and [‘Charities Criticise UK for Ending South African Aid’](#) (BBC News website, 1 May 2013).

The other target associated with MDG 5, “Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health”, has also been deemed “lagging” (DfID, [Department for International Development Annual Report and Accounts 2011–12](#), 2012, p 19). Use of contraception in developing countries among women of childbearing age who are married or in a union increased from 52 percent to 61 percent between 1990 and 2008 (DfID, [Department for International Development Annual Report and Accounts 2011–12](#), 2012, p 19). UN data suggest that, “Women in sub-Saharan Africa had the lowest level of contraceptive prevalence, and their 2010 level of 25 percent is even below that of other regions in 1990” (UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#), June 2012, p 35).

Charity Marie Stopes International has published a report which considers the number of women who lack access to contraceptives; it estimates that there are “215 million women in the developing world who currently have an unmet need for family planning”, and suggests that “Developed regions have seen contraceptive use plateau within the range of 60 percent to 80 percent. If current trends continue, south Asia will not see contraceptive prevalence hit 60 percent for approximately 20 years, while this will not happen in eastern Africa for 45 years or in middle and western Africa for a startling 500 years” (Marie Stopes, [Global Impact Report 2011](#), 26 June 2012, p 19).

The World Bank has recently published a report which considers the barriers faced by women in the developing world who wish to access contraceptives or safe abortion services. This states:

Legal barriers—such as laws requiring parental notification of their daughters' intended abortion or laws that allow husbands or partners to veto wives' or girlfriends' use of contraception—prevent girls and women from accessing family planning programmes. As a result, legal reforms can play an important role in improving reproductive health outcomes, particularly with respect to access to abortion services. Nearly 22 million unsafe abortions occurred globally in 2008, many of them in developing countries—over half of all abortions in developing countries are unsafe, compared with just 6 percent of abortions in developed countries. While highly restrictive abortion laws do not tend to lower abortion rates, they typically do make it unsafe.

(World Bank, [Closing the Deadly Gap between What we Know and What we do](#), 30 May 2013, p 17)

UN data on bilateral aid suggests that “Funding for family planning services and supplies is key to closing the gap in meeting the demand for contraception. Yet aid for family planning as a proportion of total aid for health declined over the past decade” (UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012](#), June 2012, p 39). In July 2012, the UK Government collaborated with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to host a Family Planning Summit. Donors gathered at the summit jointly committed to \$4.3 billion funding, which, by 2020, they estimated would allow 120 million women in the developing world to access family planning services by 2020 (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, [‘Landmark Summit Puts Women at Heart of Global Health’](#), 11 July 2012). Prime Minister David Cameron spoke at the event, suggesting that failing to provide access to family planning services was a “violation of human rights” ([Daily Telegraph, ‘Failing to Provide Family Planning to Women “a Violation of Human Rights”](#)”, 11 July 2012). A document published by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and DfID provides a note of the commitments made at the Summit: [London Summit on Family Planning, Summaries of Commitments](#). The UK Government pledged to double aid for family planning for eight years, increasing it from £90 million each year to £180 million.

There has been some recent controversy over Government funding for abortions. Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead has published an article in which she asserts that the US Government has placed restrictions on the spending of the ICR, a multilateral fund to which the UK also contributes, preventing it from being spent on abortion ([Guardian, ‘US Aid Ban On Abortions For Women Raped In War Leaves UK Compromised’](#), 12 February 2013). The Government has refuted this claim, saying: “Receipt of US funds by organisations does not restrict their provision of safe abortion information or services using UK funds” (HC *Hansard*, 10 June 2013, [col 48W](#)). The House of Lords discussed this subject in January, initiated by Lord Lester of Herne Hill’s Question for Short Debate on “government-funded medical care for women and girls impregnated by rape in armed conflict” (HL *Hansard*, 9 January 2013, [col 197](#)).

The UN AIDS Programme has stated that “evidence points indisputably to the important intersection of HIV and gender inequality”, explaining that “In 2010, women and girls accounted for more than half of all people living with HIV (about 52 percent). They are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, suffer economic inequalities and shoulder the bulk of the burden of caring for people living with HIV. These factors, combined with the greater biological vulnerability of women and girls to contracting HIV, have major consequences for women and girls” (UNAIDS, [Women, Girls and HIV and AIDS](#), 2011).

A briefing produced by the WHO suggests that, in sub-Saharan Africa, women represent 60 percent of those living with HIV. It states that:

Gender inequalities are a key driver of the epidemic in several ways: gender norms related to masculinity can encourage men to have more sexual partners and older men to have sexual relations with much younger women. In some settings, this contributes to higher infection rates among young women (15–24 years) compared to young men. Norms related to femininity can prevent women—especially young women—from accessing HIV information and services. Only 38 percent of young women have accurate knowledge of HIV/AIDS.

(WHO, [‘Gender Inequalities And HIV’](#))

The Government has pledged to “prevent 500,000 new HIV infections among women” in sub-Saharan Africa, “by promoting correct and consistent use of male and female condoms which reduces risk of HIV infection by 95 percent” and by continuing to support the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which provides HIV-positive pregnant women treatment to prevent HIV transmission to their babies (HC *Hansard*, 15 April 2013, [col 87W](#)).

## 5. Employment

UN figures suggest that, on average “Women perform 66 percent of the world’s work, produce 50 percent of the food, but earn only 10 percent of the income and own only one percent of the property” (United Nations Development Programme, [Gender Equality and UNDP](#), July 2011). One of the indicators associated with MDG 3 (“to promote gender equality and empower women”) is “Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector”. UN data show that:

Women’s share of paid employment outside the agricultural sector increased from 35 to 40 percent between 1990 and 2010. But women still enter the labour market on an unequal basis to men, even after accounting for educational background and skills levels. Globally, women occupy only 25 percent of senior management positions and, in 2008/2009 were on average paid 23 percent less than men. Business ownership is concentrated in men’s hands throughout the developing world. Only between 1 and 3 percent of women employed in developing regions are ‘employers’.

(UN Women, [The Millennium Development Goals Report Gender Chart 2012](#), December 2012, p 4)

The International Labour Organisation publishes more detailed figures on women’s employment in developing countries: [Global Employment Trends for Women 2012](#) (11 December 2012). A report published by DfID summarises the evidence on earnings. This finds that:

Women tend to earn less than men. Studies suggest the gap is around 23 percent in developed and 27 percent in developing countries in the formal economy. Earnings gaps are generally larger in the informal economy where most working women are located. In India casual female wage workers earn half the wages of casual male workers, controlling for differences in their individual characteristics. In Latin America, women’s earnings in the informal economy were about 53 percent of men’s in 1998.

(DfID, [Key Messages From Evidence On Gender Equality](#), September 2010, p 2)



The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations has carried out research on the role of women in agricultural work; they have found that “women comprise about 43 percent of the agricultural labour force globally and in developing countries” and that “overall the labour burden of rural women exceeds that of men, and includes a higher proportion of unpaid household responsibilities related to preparing food and collecting fuel and water”. They suggest that “agriculture can be an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. But the sector is underperforming in many countries in part because women face constraints that reduce their productivity” (FAO, [The Role of Women in Agriculture](#), 2011, p 2).

The World Bank has recently published a report on female entrepreneurs; it suggests that the entrepreneurial model is in some ways well suited to conditions for women in developing countries:

Worldwide, at least 30 percent of women in the non-agricultural labour force are self-employed in the informal sector; in Africa, this figure is 63 percent. Women-owned businesses tend to be informal, home-based and concentrated in the areas of small-scale entrepreneurship and traditional sectors, which primarily includes retail and service. Operating from the home allows women to satisfy competing demands for their time as they balance a disproportionate share of housework and childcare responsibilities.

(World Bank, [Female Entrepreneurship: Program Guidelines and Case Studies](#), 2013, p 5)

However, the report goes on to suggest that: “Gender gaps are still present in the critical skills needed to run a successful enterprise”, suggesting that a lack of previous work experience, access to finance, and legal barriers which, in some countries, discriminate against women owning property, all present challenges for female entrepreneurs in developing countries (World Bank, [Female Entrepreneurship: Program Guidelines and Case Studies](#), 2013, p 6). IT company Intel has also recently published research which suggests that: “On average across the developing world, nearly 25 percent fewer women than men have access to the Internet, and the gender gap soars to nearly 45 percent in regions like sub-Saharan Africa” (Intel, [Women and the Web: Bridging the Internet Gap and Creating New Global Opportunities in Low and Middle-income Countries](#), January 2013, p 10).

A report published by the World Bank claims that, where women are afforded greater control over household resources, either through their own earnings or cash transfers, money is spent in a way which benefits children, including through increased spending on health and education (World Bank, [World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development](#), October 2011, p 5). Another study suggests that improving women’s incomes can lead to a higher domestic formal savings rate; a study of 20 semi-industrialised countries found that the ratio of female to male earnings and the female share of manufacturing employment had a significant positive effect on domestic savings rates (S Seguino and M Floro, ‘Does Gender have any Effect on Aggregate Saving? An Empirical Analysis’, *International Review of Applied Economics*, 2003).

The UK Government has made a number of commitments to improve the economic wellbeing of women; the document which the Government published in 2011, [A New Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: Stopping Poverty Before It Starts](#) states: “We are planning initiatives to improve access to financial services for over 18 million women, to help 2.3 million women access jobs, and to secure access to land for 4.5 million women (including in Rwanda and India)” (p 3). In a speech in March, the Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, announced that the Government would be investing “Up to £11.5 million to a new partnership with the World Bank for a ‘Gender Innovation Lab’ to enable girls and women to access and

control economic resources in sub-Saharan Africa” (Justine Greening, [‘A New Focus On Girls And Women’s Rights’](#), speech at Amnesty UK, 4 March 2013). A World Bank briefing provides further information on the Gender Innovation Lab: [‘Innovation Improves Gender Programs, Spurs Economic Development in Africa, World Bank’](#) (World Bank, 8 March 2013).

## 6. Violence Against Women

The theme of this year’s International Women’s Day was violence against women. International Women’s Day is a day marked each year around the world on 8 March. For background information please see the House of Commons Library Note, [‘Women: International Women’s Day 2013, Background & Statistics’](#) (6 March 2013, SN02936).

The International Development Select Committee has published a report on: [‘Violence Against Women and Girls’](#) (HC paper 107 of session 2013–14, 13 June 2013). This report provides an account of the prevalence of three forms of violence which are “a common feature of everyday life for millions of women globally”: female genital mutilation, early marriage and domestic violence. The report states that “globally, up to 140 million women have been subjected to some form of female genital mutilation”, adding that “The highest rates are found in countries in the Horn of Africa. 98 percent of women in Somalia have experienced female genital mutilation”. The report suggests that “Early marriage is one of the greatest threats to the protection of women and girls. One-third of girls in developing countries are married by the age of 18, some as young as seven years old... Girls who marry early are more likely to experience domestic violence, abuse and forced sexual relations”. The report furthermore states that domestic violence is “the most common form of violence... Globally, up to seven out of every ten women experience intimate partner violence (physical and/or sexual violence) in their lifetime” (International Development Select Committee, [‘Targeting Everyday Forms of Violence against Women and Girls’](#), *Violence Against Women and Girls*, HC paper 107 of session 2013–14, 13 June 2013).

The report also includes a survey of the evidence on violence against women in situations of armed conflict and humanitarian crises, stating:

Although there is no comprehensive data on the extent of sexual violence in conflict, it is estimated that between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped during the Bosnian War, and that 200,000 Congolese women have been raped since 1998. Around 400,000 women were raped during the 100-day Rwandan genocide in 1994. Although there is now international legal recognition of rape as a war crime and a crime against humanity, including in the statute of the International Criminal Court, prosecutions remain low. For example, there have only been 30 convictions for the up to 50,000 rapes perpetrated during the Bosnian war.

(International Development Select Committee, [‘Prioritising Violence Against Women and Girls in Humanitarian and Conflict Settings’](#), *Violence Against Women and Girls*, HC paper 107 of session 2013–14, 13 June 2013)

The Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, has described violence against women as “the greatest unmet challenge of our times” ([‘A New Focus on Girls and Women’s Rights’](#), speech at Amnesty UK, 4 March 2013). The Government has made several policy commitments; in 2010 the Government published a [‘Call to End Violence against Women and Girls’](#) (Home Office, 25 November 2010). In 2011 DfID published [‘A New Strategic Vision for](#)



[Girls and Women: Stopping Poverty Before It Starts](#) (8 March 2011) which highlighted tackling violence against women and girls as one of four “pillars for action”, stating:

We will help 10 million women to access justice through the courts, police, and legal assistance. This will include supporting survivors of violence to seek legal redress, alongside resolving disputes over issues such as land and inheritance. We aim to work in at least 15 countries to address physical and sexual violence against girls and women—increasing the numbers of survivors who have access to treatment and advice, and whose cases are satisfactorily investigated.

(DfID, [A New Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: Stopping Poverty Before It Starts](#), 8 March 2011, p 3)

In May 2012, DfID published a [Theory of Change of Violence against Women and Girls](#). In May 2012, the Foreign Secretary launched the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Foreign Secretary William Hague Announced a UK Initiative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict](#), 29 May 2012). In March 2013, the Secretary of State, Justine Greening, gave a speech in which she made several commitments:

On Afghanistan, I have decided that the UK country plan will include tackling violence against women and girls as a country strategic priority. As troop draw-down takes place, gains must be built on and not lost. DfID is developing an ambitious new £35 million programme to combat female genital mutilation and cutting—the biggest ever investment in eradicating the practice. We want to help end the practice in a generation. I have established a research and innovation fund to drive forward successful initiatives to tackle violence against women and girls, and new programmes that respond to the specific needs of girls and women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syrian refugees.

(Justine Greening, [‘A New Focus on Girls and Women’s Rights’](#), speech at Amnesty UK, 4 March 2013)

Ms Greening also announced that in autumn 2013 she planned to arrange an international summit on addressing violence against women and girls in humanitarian settings ([‘A New Focus on Girls and Women’s Rights’](#), 4 March 2013). This was reflected in the Queen’s Speech of 8 May which announced that “My Government will work to prevent sexual violence in conflict worldwide” (HL *Hansard*, 8 May 2013, [col 3](#)).

The International Development Select Committee’s report praises the Government “for putting strong policies and increased programming and leadership in place to make its aspiration of tackling violence against women and girls overseas a real possibility”, while identifying several challenges which, it suggests, DfID must address, including suggesting that “in order to be a credible force for change around the world, the UK must ensure that its own ‘house is in order’ by tackling practices such as FGM within its own shores” (International Development Select Committee, [Violence Against Women and Girls](#), HC paper107 of session 2013–14, 13 June 2013). A report published in March by the European Institute for Gender Equality claims that more girls are at risk of genital mutilation in the UK than anywhere else in Europe, suggesting that 65,790 people living in the UK have been victims of the practice, while a further 30,000 are at risk (EIFE, [Female Genital Mutilation in the European Union and Croatia](#), 6 March 2013).