

As the Beijing +20 and the Millennium Development Goals reviews get underway, women and girls are suffering from gender-based violence and discrimination everywhere around the world, even at the cost of their lives. A global legal framework to promote equality between women and men has been put in place over the last several decades, both internationally and regionally, but has not yet been implemented at national and local levels. This framework includes detailed provision on the protection of women's and girls' rights such as set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. International frameworks and commitments make a difference in the lives of women around the world only, however, to the extent that they are actually implemented at the national level. The same is true for the Millennium Development Goals, Goal 3 of which includes promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Achieving gender equality, including through the prevention of violence against women and girls, is essential to meeting any internationally agreed upon development goals, as clearly outlined in the World Bank's *2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development*. Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals has not thus far been achieved, in part because of the prevalence of gender-based violence and discrimination and a basic lack of legal equality for women and girls around the world. We, Equality Now and the above human rights and women's rights organizations, therefore call on all member states at this 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (the Commission) to endorse a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 Millennium Development Goal framework on **gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment**, with at least one of the specific components being *freedom from violence*, as recommended by UN Women in its June 2013 paper, "A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components."

Progress towards this goal should be measured by discrete and universal indicators and achievable within a generation. These should include qualitatively descriptive indicators that address structural inequalities that contribute to violence against women and girls and discourage sustainable development. The repeal of discriminatory laws is one such important structural indicator that affects virtually every phase of a woman's life – employment, citizenship, property inheritance, marriage and divorce.

Discriminatory laws fundamentally promote inequality and the disempowerment of women and girls, limit economic and political opportunities and represent an official endorsement of sex discrimination and even violence against women and girls. Ridding the world of laws that discriminate against women and girls is an essential first step in ridding the world of sex discrimination and violence. Comprehensive equality before the law and access to justice are critical components in the urgent struggle to end violence against women and girls and in the conception of a new development framework to end poverty, as noted by the UN Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice at the Commission's 57th session in 2013.

We call on member states to partner with civil society and to use the occasion of 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to re-energize their efforts and uphold their commitments, particularly to the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against

women and girls as agreed at the Commission's 57th session, by, as a first-step, endorsing a stand-alone goal on gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development framework.