

**EuroNGOs Conference and AGM 2010**  
**“Gender and SRHR at the Heart of the MDGs”**

**8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010**  
**The Grosvenor Hotel, London, UK**

## **Background**

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which have had and continue to have an enormous impact on the development community – donors and civil society alike -, and have raised the ambition regarding the achievements necessary in the fight against poverty. But in 2010, women and girls are still the majority of poor and vulnerable people. Gender equality and women’s empowerment is not fully conveyed in the global MDG targets and their importance is by no means reflected in the MDG indicators, the only means to measure progress towards these goals.

But gender equality – and the empowerment of women as a prerequisite to it – has been recognized by a variety of international conferences and agreements prior to the MDGs, especially the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD PoA). Both conferences acknowledged that sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are not only essential human rights but also fundamental in tackling issues related to population, to end violence against girls and women, and fighting inequality and poverty by fostering human and national development.

However, in 2010

- HIV is the leading cause of death and disease among women of reproductive age, three in every five adults living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women, with young women making up the largest percentage of new infections
- An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), with an estimated 92 million girls from 10 years of age and above having undergone FGM in Africa.<sup>1</sup> Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) is internationally recognized as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, not having any health benefits at all. Mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15, procedures can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and potential childbirth complications and newborn deaths.
- Early marriage is still common worldwide, with young girls often forced into marriage and sexual relations, causing health risks, including HIV/AIDS, obstetric fistula and maternal morbidity and mortality. In certain regions of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India and Nigeria, at least 40% of women are married before age 15.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/index.html>, accessed 23 April 2010

<sup>2</sup> See: [http://data.unaids.org/pub/FactSheet/2010/20100302\\_fs\\_womenhiv\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/FactSheet/2010/20100302_fs_womenhiv_en.pdf), accessed 23 April 2010

- Maternal Mortality (MDG 5) is still the MDG where least progress has been made, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia.

Evidence-based research in recent years has proved that gender policies help accelerate SRHR and thus not only the health MDGs (MDG 4,5,6) but also many of the other MDGs. There is also already solid evidence that investing in gender equality is one goal that can contribute simultaneously towards progress on a number of other goals, and especially on the SRHR- and health-related goals. Some of the many illustrative figures show that:

- Women's empowerment is a prerequisite to forward progress on MDG 5. Women die from lack of family planning, inability to negotiate the number and spacing of their children, lack of money to pay for transport to and for skilled birth attendance or emergency obstetric care, and from violence. Girls age 15-20 are twice as likely to die in childbirth as women in their twenties. Significant investments in programs focused on adolescent girls, including education, a fair legal environment, more equitable social services, and greater protection from gender-based violence, would pay big dividends for reducing maternal mortality.
- three quarters of deaths among babies in the first four weeks of life could be prevented if women were adequately nourished and received appropriate care during and after pregnancy (MDG 4)
- reducing maternal mortality and morbidity, including the estimated 74.000 yearly deaths (1 in 7 of all maternal deaths) caused by unsafe abortions, relies most heavily on improving the status of women and a strengthening of women's political influence over health policy and spending.<sup>3</sup>
- HIV/AIDS spreads twice as fast among uneducated girls as among girls with even some schooling, and investing in girls' education is crucial to halt the epidemic.

## Rationale

EuroNGOs acknowledges that attaining the MDGs will not be possible without a much stronger focus on gender issues in general and SRHR in particular.

2010, with the Beijing+15 and the MDG+10 reviews, creates excellent momentum and windows of opportunities to strengthen our advocacy efforts aimed at the real improvement of both the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women. These reviews will not only remind policy and decision-makers, civil society and the donor community that there are only 5 years left for the international community to deliver on their promises to poverty reduction. But also that without gender equality and the empowerment of women, including their sexual and reproductive rights, poverty, hunger and disease can not be combated efficiently.

Building upon the results of the Beijing+15 and MDG summits, the EuroNGOs conference 2010, hosted by EuroNGOs member organization Marie Stopes International (MSI) in London, UK, will be entitled "**Gender and SRHR at the Heart of the MDGs**". In

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<sup>3</sup>See: "[Hit or Miss: Women's Rights and the Millennium Development Goals](#)", Action Aid, 2008.

cooperation with expert speakers, policymakers and participants both from the “Northern” and “Southern” hemisphere, and a broader community of development cooperation, women’s, human rights, and humanitarian organisations and experts, it will provide a space to find common grounds and joint ways forward. This will allow for the opening up to and bringing in a broader constituency of NGOs working towards poverty alleviation from a rights-based perspective. It will also foster support for the South-North partnership cooperation and promote EuroNGOs’ pilot project on this.

### **Goal and Objectives**

Brought together through a common theme of interest and crucial importance of gender and women’s empowerment in the MDGs, the goal of the EuroNGOs international conference 2010 is to bring together the international SRHR community with other development cooperation, women and humanitarian constituencies. It will provide a unique opportunity to strengthen SRHR, gender and women’s empowerment in European and global Civil Society advocacy efforts.

It will specifically:

- Provide the latest evidence-based research results regarding the importance of gender, women’s empowerment and SRHR for poverty alleviation
- prompt partnership and coalition building among SRHR civil society actors and a broader constituency of development cooperation, humanitarian, women’s and human rights NGOs
- foster partnership and coalition building among civil society actors advocating for SRHR internationally from the “Northern” and “Southern” hemisphere, from “donor” and “recipient” countries
- raise and increase awareness on the importance of gender issues and SRHR to poverty alleviation among members of the newly elected UK parliament

### **Programme**

The EuroNGOs conference and AGM 2010 “Gender and SRHR at the Heart of the MDGs” will be hosted by its UK member organisation “Marie Stopes International”, and will take place on 8-9 November 2010 in the [Grosvenor Hotel](#), London, UK.

A 1,5 days international conference will involve gender and development experts, stakeholders and representatives (from Civil Society, donor agencies, international organisations and governmental bodies) in the EU 27, European donor countries, the “Global South”, the USA, Canada, Australia, Japan and New Zealand.

The conference will be comprised of expert presentations and plenary discussions involving the audience. Expert speakers and participants will:

- consider the evidence and latest research findings on the importance of SRHR, gender equality and women’s empowerment to reach the MDGs,
- propose ways on how to implement gender-sensitive policies and programming as well as how to monitor progress with better data,
- discuss the positive impact of successfully implemented gender policies and programs on the poor and on poverty reduction,

- provide an update on current EU and International gender policies and implementation programs
- propose ways forward to make aid a more effective tool in achieving MDG 4, 5 and 6 and thus better SRHR through gender equality and women's empowerment

In working groups, SRHR experts and representatives from interested development cooperation constituencies will further discuss and formulate recommendations for policymakers on how to bring forward the gender and women's empowerment agenda. After the official closing of the conference, all participants are invited to learn about current international initiatives and research projects at the Civil Society and Intergovernmental level related to SRHR in development cooperation.

Additionally, a market place will foster networking and exchange of experiences by allowing participants to present their organisations, current programs and initiatives, allow for poster presentations, etc.

The conference will culminate in a parliamentary reception in the UK parliament on the 9th November in the evening. The event will aim to introduce the SRHR community to the (new) political UK institutions, members of parliament and London-based ambassadors. They will be invited to enter into a dialogue with the Civil Society SRHR community.

The EuroNGOs Annual Membership Meeting will take place in the format of a closed membership session in the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> November, prior to the official opening of the conference. Members and associated members will gather to address organizational issues, receive updates on and discuss EuroNGOs' ongoing projects, and share experiences.

#### Organising Structure:

The host organisation "Marie Stopes International" (MSI) and the EuroNGOs secretariat will organize the event in close cooperation with the EuroNGOs Steering Committee. The EuroNGOs website will host a special page on the 2010 Conference and Annual Meeting.

Expert speakers as well as resource persons for the various working groups will be identified in co-operation with the EuroNGOs Steering Committee, the EuroNGOs coordinator and EuroNGOs network members and partners well ahead of the conference and will be briefed according to the goal and objectives of the conference.

#### Target Group:

The primary target group will be EuroNGOs members and partner organizations from the EU 27 member states, European donor countries, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, representatives from partner organizations from the "Global South", and especially representatives from a wider NGO community (gender, women, humanitarian and human rights). Young participants – mainly representatives from youth programs and networks from EuroNGOs members and partners – will be especially encouraged to participate.

The organisation team will strive for at least 30% representation of speakers and resource persons from the “Global South” and substantial representation of representatives from Youth organizations/platforms both from the “North” and the “South”.

Additional target groups are:

- Representatives from UNFPA, WHO and the World Bank
- Representatives from private foundations
- Representatives from the EC
- Representatives of the UK Parliament, DFID and London-based ambassadors (for the Parliamentary event)

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

- Increased visibility of SRHR and women’s empowerment as a prerequisite in the broader development cooperation community
- Better understanding of the importance of women’s empowerment, SRHR and gender to poverty alleviation, with a specific focus on the health-related MDGs
- New grounds will be broken by promoting N/S partnership work and engaging other (development cooperation) sectors
- Increased profile of SRHR and gender in development cooperation with the new UK government, DFID, and ambassadors
- It is anticipated that a number of sectors will take up/strengthen SRHR and women’s empowerment in their advocacy efforts and programming

### **Budget and Financial Assistance**

All participants are encouraged to seek financial support from their own institutions. EuroNGOs and MSI will provide travel awards for partners from the “global South” and EuroNGOs members from the “new” EU member states (covering all travel and accommodation costs). Conference costs for the 1<sup>st</sup> representative of EuroNGOs member organisations will be waived (covering lunch and coffee breaks at both days and conference packages/information material).

All other participants will be asked to pay a conference fee according to their organisations annual income. Registration fees will be waived for speakers, youth participants, those who are serving as chair and every 1<sup>st</sup> representative of a EuroNGOs member organisation.

Travel and accommodation costs for speakers will be covered, but speakers are expected to participate pro bono.