

Progress of the World's Women 2000

UNIFEM
Biennial
Report

UNIFEM



*United Nations
Development Fund
for Women*

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Consultants

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Melika Hoodbhoy
Hande Keklik
Anita Nayar

Background papers

Savitri Bisnath
Jasmine Gideon

Editor: Karen Judd
Designer: Karen Kelleher
Production: Joanne Sandler,
Rosemary Kalapurakal,
Kirsten Gelsdorf, Tina Johnson

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Interns
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Dr. Mariama Williams
Development Alternatives for
Women in a New Era (DAWN),
Kingston, Jamaica

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Preface

It is with great pride that I introduce the first edition of a new UNIFEM biennial report, *Progress of the World's Women*, to stand alongside other UN flagship publications: *The Human Development Report* (UNDP), *The State of the World's Children* (UNICEF), and *The State of World Population* (UNFPA). UNIFEM's decision to launch *Progress of the World's Women* responds to the need to inspire concentrated attention and action to address the opportunities and challenges that countries worldwide are facing in their effort to achieve greater equality in the lives of women and girls.

UNIFEM has been supporting innovative programmes of governments, NGOs and other actors in more than 100 countries to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. While the challenges are significant, we are encouraged by the advances that have been achieved in a number of critical areas. By focusing on strategic interventions, pilot initiatives, advocacy and the facilitation of new partnerships between United Nations agencies, governments, civil society and the media, we have made significant strides in critical areas, such as addressing violence against women. This includes changes in legislation and improvements in law enforcement, as well as increased allocation of resources to violence prevention, protection and rehabilitation services for women. Advances have also been achieved through innovative initiatives designed to engender governance and leadership, increase women's access to economic opportunities and improve understanding of the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS.

This inaugural report, *Progress of the World's Women 2000*, assesses what has been achieved for women's economic empowerment and gender equality from the mid 1980s to the late 1990s. Launched at the UN Special Sessions to review progress in implementing commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit on Social Development, it focuses on the economic dimensions of women's progress in

the context of globalization. Using a combination of statistical indicators and personal testimonies, it shows that while there has been progress in many countries, this progress is uneven. Even in the richest countries some forms of gender inequality persist. There is still a long way to go before the promise of the Beijing Platform for Action is fulfilled. This raises the need for greater accountability, calling for more concentrated attention to three areas: targets and indicators that are needed to track progress, individuals and institutions who need to be held accountable, and the measures that need to be taken towards accelerating progress for women.

While the Beijing Platform for Action and the programmes for action from other UN world conferences on women offer a resounding endorsement of the need for gender justice and equality, they provide a limited set of specific targets and indicators as tools for ensuring greater accountability. In essence, the countries of the world have agreed to a path but have neglected to create sufficient road signs that let us know how far we have come in our journey and how far we have to go.

The International Conferences of the 1990s have led to agreement on a range of targets and indicators for women's progress. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development was especially instrumental in introducing targets and indicators that focus on women's health, education and reproductive rights. But we lack comparable targets and indicators for women's economic empowerment and economic rights. For instance, no targets and indicators are specified to address gender equality in the labour market, or in the time devoted to unpaid care work, or to measure the "feminization" of poverty. In June 2000, the world has an opportunity to link the review of the Fourth World Conference on Women to other UN world conference reviews, as well as to the goals set forth by the Millennium Report issued by the Secretary-General of the

United Nations. Integrated United Nations follow-up can serve to ensure that global development targets and indicators to address income poverty are specified in ways that take into account gender disparities in income poverty.

Policies to ensure that targets are met must be implemented in ways that promote rather than impede women's enjoyment of human rights. The discourse of rights has a powerful moral force, which the discourse of targets lacks. We must therefore explicitly link targets to the promotion and protection of women's human rights. The achievement of gender equality targets and protection of women's human rights require governments to make appropriate allocations of resources. Government budgets, both raising revenues and making expenditures, must be reshaped to ensure that they are fully supportive of women's empowerment and gender equality.

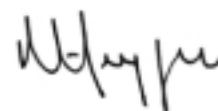
States have made national and international policy commitments to advance the status of women and by April 2000, 118 governments had adopted national action plans or policy directives on gender equality. However, with globalization, non-state institutions are increasingly becoming critical in promoting or hindering progress for women. The strengthened roles of civil society, the private sector, multilateral agencies, and international economic institutions in decision-making processes call for a shift of focus from governments to governance. Accountability has many dimensions, demanding synergetic partnerships, strategic alliances, and many more stakeholders. No single agent on its own can deliver the needed changes. Alliances and partnerships based on shared responsibility and common ground are crucial if we are to have progress for all.

The prospects for women's progress depend upon global, regional, national and local contexts. Currently, the major phenomenon shaping our world is globalization, the global integration of trade, finance, investment, and use of new technology. The gender effects of globalization are complex and uneven, with new risks and new opportunities for different groups. If globalization is to be pro-women and pro-poor, it must be steered and shaped in accord with international human rights conventions and the development consensus and targets reached at various UN conferences. Women's capacity must be built to manage new risks and to take advantage of new opportunities, including new information and communications technologies. Women-friendly financial institutions based on greater participation and accountability must be created. At the same time, the elimination of gender bias as a "development distortion" must be a central objective of public policy if development gains

from new opportunities are to be maximized. Finally, business corporations must be encouraged to commit themselves to social responsibility and accountability in all their operations. Through a series of joint efforts, markets, technology and economic policy must be transformed so that they operate fairly, and deliver the potential fruits of globalization to poor women.

Equality, Development and Peace, the themes of the four UN conferences on women, are the bedrock upon which are anchored the aspirations of the UN system, its member states and its peoples. If equality, development and peace are to be the basis for organizing our social systems, then we need people in government, business and civil society to promote the right kind of values, policies, institutions and relationships to shape our world. Partnerships among governments, civil society and businesses for social responsibility are extremely important in a globalizing world. We need to give more attention to the norms, leadership and decision-making that can make globalization truly supportive of human development, economic and gender justice.

The stakes for women are high. Women want a world in which inequality based on gender, class, caste and ethnicity is absent from every country and from the relationships among countries. Women want a world where fulfillment of basic needs becomes basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Where women's unpaid work of nurturing, caring and weaving the fabric of community will be valued and shared equally by men. Where each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity. Where progress for women is recognized as progress for all.



Noeleen Heyzer

Executive Director
UNIFEM

Overview

Progress of the World's Women 2000

This report examines the progress of the world's women from the mid 1980s to the late 1990s. It concentrates on the economic dimensions of gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of globalization. The report includes a discussion of women's visions, experiences and dilemmas about progress as well as benchmarks for progress established by internationally agreed-upon rights, standards, objectives and targets. It assesses women's progress using a variety of indicators and examines the issue of accountability, focusing in particular on government accountability for the gender impact of their policies and programmes, including national budgets, and on corporate accountability for the social impact of their operations. Finally, it explores ways in which globalization can be reshaped to promote the

- developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life;
- gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power;
- developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Acquiring these capabilities requires both a process of self-empowerment, in which women claim time and space to re-examine their own lives critically and collectively, and the creation of an enabling environment for women's empowerment by other social actors, including other civil society organizations, governments and international

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