



### Key Facts: Progress Since Beijing

Fifteen years since the Beijing Declaration, although there has been progress in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, that progress has been slow and uneven.

- The world continues to progress towards gender parity in education as many countries have successfully promoted girls' education as part of their efforts to boost overall enrolment. But gender disparities in education are clearly evident in some regions. Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia have the largest gender gaps in primary enrolment. At the current rate of progress, the MDG 3 target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015 remains far from being achieved.
- While some countries have succeeded in significantly reducing maternal death rates in the past decade, more than half a million women die every year - or one woman every minute - from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. MDG 5, which seeks to improve maternal health, calls for a reduction by three quarters in the maternal mortality ratio from that of 1990, and for the achievement of universal access to reproductive health. But this is the MDG towards which there has been the least progress so far. This reflects the low priority given to the empowerment of women and meeting women's needs.
- UNICEF figures estimate that the number of child deaths in 2008 declined to 8.8 million from 12.5 million in 1990, the base line year for the Millennium Development Goals. But the global rate of improvement is still insufficient to reach the target of reducing under-five mortality by two-thirds by 2015.
- Since 2001, a large majority of countries have integrated issues related to women into their national HIV policies and strategic plans and have attained gender equity in HIV testing and the delivery of anti-retrovirals. But 25 years into the AIDS epidemic, gender inequality and unequal power relationships between and among women and men continue to have a significant influence on the epidemic. Globally, about half of all people living with HIV are female, with variations within regions, countries and communities. In Sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 60 percent of people living with HIV are female and in Southern Africa, girls are 2 to 4.5 times more likely than boys to become infected with HIV.

- More women than ever are holding political office. As of January 2009, women had reached the highest parliamentary position – presiding officer – in 31 parliamentary chambers. By March 2009, 15 women were serving as heads of state or government, up from nine in 2000. Impressive gains were made in Latin America and the Caribbean, where women hold 22 percent of all legislative seats, the highest regional average. But women still hold less than 10 percent of parliamentary seats in Oceania, Northern Africa and Western Asia. The global average of women holding parliamentary seats (18.6 percent) is far from the target of 30 percent set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At the present rate, it will take another 40 years to reach gender parity.
- More women than ever before are participating in the workforce; women occupy almost 40 percent of all paid jobs outside agriculture, compared to 35 percent in 1990. But almost two thirds of women in the developing world work in vulnerable jobs as self-employed persons or as unpaid family workers. In Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, this type of work accounts for more than 80 percent of all jobs for women. In developing countries, women consistently lag behind men in formal labour force participation and entrepreneurship, earn less than men for similar work, and have less access to credit and lower inheritance and ownership rights than men do.
- As a result of the global economic crisis, many more women are being pushed into vulnerable jobs with limited or no safety nets that guard against income loss during economic hardship. The large number of women unpaid workers in family businesses also adds to their already heavy burden of unpaid care work in households.
- Since the Beijing Platform for Action, there have been several Security Council resolutions addressing women's security needs. In 2000, the Security Council passed Resolution 1325 which established women's rights in a conflict context as a security matter. In 2008, Resolution 1820 was the first resolution to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a matter of international peace and security. In 2009, Resolution 1888 followed. This resolution provides for concrete ways to track progress through establishing a reporting process and a mechanism to hold Governments and the UN accountable. These are landmark resolutions but they are only the beginning of what must be done to ensure the security of women throughout the world
- Research by UNIFEM indicates that in 10 major peace processes in the past decade, women were on average six percent of negotiators and under three percent of signatories. Only five peace accords have referred to the use of sexual violence as a military and political tactic, despite its increase in both frequency and brutality.