



UNDP Key Messages for CSW 2010

Progress on the Beijing Platform for Action's 12 critical areas of concern will accelerate progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the world's global compact to eradicate poverty. The 12 areas are: poverty, education and training, health, the economy, power and decision-making, human rights, armed conflict, institutional mechanisms, the environment, violence against women and the girl child. Gender equality has intrinsic value and is a goal in its own right (MDG 3). Without making progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment, none of the MDGs can be achieved.

Fifteen years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there has been progress in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, but that progress has been slow and uneven. Women's exclusion in most global, regional, national and even household level decision-making remains the rule rather than the exception. The global average of women holding parliamentary seats (18.6 percent) is far from the target of 30 percent set in the Beijing Declaration. While 39 countries have achieved the Beijing target, one quarter of all parliamentary chambers still have less than 10 percent women members. When poor women are involved in the decisions that affect their lives, we will see significant progress toward the Millennium Development Goals.

To accelerate progress toward the Millennium Development Goals, we need to focus more on women's economic empowerment. While more women than ever before are participating in the workforce, **many poor women are employed informally in poorly paid, insecure and hazardous jobs with no labour rights or social protection.** **Economic empowerment requires:** providing economic opportunity, including access to finance, training and technology; strengthening women's legal status and rights; and ensuring the inclusion and participation of women in decision-making processes in all spheres.

The global economic crisis presents an opportunity to rebuild global and national economies in ways that recognize the different impacts of the crisis on women and men and to protect gains the world has made in reducing poverty. By addressing the differences between women and men in economic policies and linking economic and social policies more closely, governments can trigger faster recovery, create more inclusive economies, and more equal and balanced societies.

Women and men are affected by and contribute differently to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and their specific needs and roles should be considered in responses. Poor women have limited access to resources and information, restricted rights, and limited mobility, all of which make them particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. Yet women are not just victims of climate change; their leadership in areas such as natural resource management, agriculture and food security has been recognized for centuries. Poor women are powerful agents of change and their knowledge and skills contribute to household and community resilience during crises and transitions.

Solutions to the AIDS epidemic should meet the needs of women and girls, who experience the impact of HIV particularly severely. Responses need to grapple with how women and girls are affected as well as infected; emphasize the participation, empowerment and rights of women and girls to prevention, treatment, care and support; and address the legal, social and economic inequalities that increase women's and girls' risks and vulnerabilities to HIV.

The proposed new gender entity to be established by the United Nations will provide a powerful voice for women and girls at the global, regional and local levels as well as increased assistance for national partners as they address critical gaps and challenges in their efforts to achieve equality for women and girls.