



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

- Only seven developed countries - **Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Netherlands and Germany** - have attained high levels of gender equality and women's empowerment based on their achievements in girls' and women's secondary school enrolment and women's literacy, non-agricultural wage employment and seats in national parliaments.
- The developing countries with the highest levels of gender equality and women's empowerment based on the selected indicators are **Argentina, Costa Rica and South Africa**.
- **The greatest improvements in terms of women's empowerment have occurred in women's share of seats in parliament.**
- The countries with the lowest achievement in education, literacy and non-agricultural wage employment tend to be the poorest. But women's share of seats in parliament is not related to wealth and is highest where special measures have been introduced to help get women elected, as in Mozambique where women now hold 30 per cent of seats.
- Countries in which there is a strong cultural preference for sons also tend towards the lowest levels of gender equality.
- In many of the countries with the lowest scores, progress is too slow.

In much of the world, poverty and gender inequality go hand in hand, according to the innovative analysis in UNIFEM's *Progress of the World's Women 2002*. Education, literacy and non-agricultural wage employment for women are directly affected by poverty and conflict, which often plunges a nation into poverty or exacerbates already difficult economic conditions. The only indicator of gender equality that is not affected by poverty is women's share of seats in national parliaments, where decisions to use quotas, such as making 30 per cent of all candidates women, have led to dramatic increases in women's representation.

Argentina, Costa Rica and South Africa are examples of developing countries that have performed well on globally agreed upon indicators, primarily because of the number of women in their national parliaments. While electing women to office is an extremely important step towards gender equality, it does not mean that all other dimensions of women's lives are also improving. In Argentina, for example, women have been especially hard hit by the recent financial crisis.

Progress 2002 also shows that women in sub-Saharan Africa face the greatest challenges. Women in the region suffer from the highest levels of maternal deaths and the highest prevalence levels of HIV/AIDS. In addition, more than half the population lives on less than US \$1/day, the highest poverty rate in the world. It is also the region with the lowest per capita gross national product. Average regional income fell in the period 1990 to 2000. All of this is reflected in the statistics presented in *Progress 2002*. Girls' and women's school enrolment and literacy are low compared to other regions, and compared to boys and men within the region. Women's share of non-agricultural wage employment is equally low compared to other regions and compared to men.

Women in sub-Saharan Africa are already working to better their condition, as activists and decision-makers. Nevertheless, the developed nations of the world will have to increase their support to nations that have the lowest levels of gender equality because of poverty. A more just international economic system will also increase women's empowerment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Progress of the World's Women 2002 uses the indicators created by the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals are an important recognition by the international community that ending poverty, hunger and inequality will require a concerted effort by all nations. These far-reaching goals can only be achieved if efforts to improve conditions are carefully tracked and analyzed. To allow this to happen, the MDGs are backed by a set of indicators that are used to analyze progress towards each goal. UNIFEM's analysis of the indicators for Goal 3 - 'promote gender equality and women's empowerment' - shows that they can be improved to provide a better picture of whether the goal is actually being achieved. UNIFEM proposed the following alterations:

1. For girls' enrolment rates in school:

- Monitor the actual level of girls' enrolment in addition to gender disparities between boys and girls.
- Track school completion rates as well as enrolment rates.

2. For literacy:

- Track the actual level of literacy, as well as the gender disparity between boys and girls.

3. For women's economic equality and empowerment, develop additional indicators to:

- Track women's participation in informal wage work.
- Develop a 'decent work' indicator.
- Create a target to end gender disparity in wages.
- Measure the extent to which women are paid a living wage.