

Foreword

The State of the World's Children 2007 reports on the lives of women around the world for a simple reason: Gender equality and the well-being of children go hand in hand. When women are empowered to live full and productive lives, children prosper. UNICEF's experience also shows the opposite: When women are denied equal opportunity within a society, children suffer.

Working within countries to achieve Millennium Development Goal 3 – promoting gender equality and empowering women – will reap the double dividend of bettering the lives of both women and children. It will also contribute to achieving all the other goals, from reducing poverty and hunger to saving children's lives, improving maternal health, ensuring universal education, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing new and innovative partnerships for development.



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Despite the international community's commitment to gender equality, the lives of millions of women and girls throughout the world are plagued by discrimination, disempowerment and poverty. This report illustrates the many challenges that remain. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the AIDS pandemic. Many girls are forced into child marriages, some before they are 15 years old. Maternal mortality figures remain indefensibly high in many countries. In most places, women earn less than men for equal work. Around the world, millions of women and girls suffer from physical and sexual violence, with little recourse to justice and protection.

Declarations, conventions and goals are not enough. It is imperative that we move resolutely from the realm of words to the realm of concrete action. As these pages will make clear, the day when women and girls have equal opportunities to be educated, to participate in government, to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to be secure from gender violence and discrimination will be the day when the promise of gender equality is fulfilled and UNICEF's mission of a world fit for children can be realized.

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