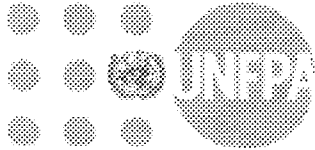


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Commission on the Status of Women

Invest in Women and Girls

Statement

by

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27 February 2008

New York

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my honour to speak today on behalf of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund.

UNFPA has always been and remains a champion of increased investment in women and girls. We are very glad that financing for gender equality and women's empowerment is the priority theme for this year's session. We need to do all we can to reverse the feminization of poverty and to unleash the full potential of half the human race to advance peace, development and human rights.

We hope that a year from now, we will look back at this session as the ripple that became a wave.

A wave of increased investment in the education, health and empowerment of women and girls. A wave that carries hope, freedom and opportunity. A wave that washes away violence and discrimination against women.

In families and communities around the world, women are making their children a priority. Now it is time for the world to make women a priority.

At the 2005 World Summit, leaders agreed on seven key policy actions to advance women's empowerment and gender equality.

- They agreed to increase investments in universal education and to close the gender gap in schools by 2015.
- They agreed to ensure equal access to reproductive health.
- They agreed to guarantee women's right to own and inherit property and equal access to assets and resources such as land, credit and technology.
- They agreed to promote equal access for women to labour markets, employment and labour protection.
- They agreed to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including by ending impunity. The Secretary-General's new campaign to end violence against women reinforces this priority.

And to accelerate action, leaders at the World Summit agreed to increase the representation of women in Government decision-making.

At UNFPA, we know that investing in women creates ripples that bring about waves of positive change. And we know that change is urgently needed and long overdue.

Poor sexual and reproductive health is a leading killer and disabler of women, which robs them of their potential and productivity and reinforces poverty.

Today one woman dies every minute from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. More than 200 million women have an unmet need for family planning. And in every region of the world, HIV prevalence is increasing among women and adolescent girls, threatening the fabric of society and the development and stability of entire nations.

The new target on universal access to reproductive health in the MDG monitoring framework under goal 5 to improve maternal health paves the way for greater progress.

By guaranteeing universal access to reproductive health, as governments have agreed, we will reduce poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS. We will meet unmet need for family planning.

We will reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality. And we will advance women's empowerment and gender equality. As we said at the Women Deliver Conference last year in London, Invest in Women: It Pays!

Mr. Chairman,

UNFPA realizes that the United Nations must lead by example. To increase investments in women and make greater progress in urgent areas, we have created thematic funds that are open for investment. These aim to support national efforts to improve maternal health, to ensure reproductive health commodity security, to end female genital mutilation in 17 high-prevalence countries, and to end the devastating condition of obstetric fistula.

We are moving ahead because we know that what we do today – how well we advance the status of women – will shape our common future.

To more fully measure progress, we are improving the availability and use of sex disaggregated data.

As government officials and delegates, and leaders of civil society, you are well-placed to call for increased investment in women and girls.

This is essential to ensure that the implementation of the International Conference on Financing for Development will increase investment for women's empowerment and gender equality.

Moving forward together, we will create a wave of change.
Thank you.

