



[click here to print](#)

## UNFPA Welcomes Millennium Project's Emphasis on Critical Roles of Gender and Reproductive Health in Poverty Reduction; Urges Speedy Implementation of Recommendations

***Development Experts Strongly Support Programs that Promote Reproductive Health and Rights, Call them "Critical to Overall Success in Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction"***

17 January 2005

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**—Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, the Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, has welcomed the recommendations of the report of the United Nations Millennium Project and urged all development actors to implement them rapidly to save lives, reduce poverty and promote development in poor countries. The Millennium Project is an independent group of development experts, led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University, New York.

"This authoritative and practical roadmap to poverty reduction and development represents a definitive affirmation of the Cairo Consensus on Population and Development, the tenth anniversary of which we marked only last year," said Ms. Obaid. "The recommendations provide further evidence that the Cairo Consensus, particularly on ensuring universal access to reproductive health, is critical to attaining the world's poverty reduction and development goals. The report's emphasis on the central role of women in poverty reduction also adds resonance to the Beijing Plan of Action, the tenth anniversary of which we shall mark this year."

"The twentieth century was known for ending political apartheid," continued Ms. Obaid. "Since this report says our generation has a chance to halve extreme poverty, let us all – developing and developed nations – seize this one moment in time to do so by also freeing women from all forms of discrimination, bias and violence. In doing so, we will make our generation and the twenty-first century remembered in history for ending gender apartheid. I pledge UNFPA's commitment to this cause."

Priorities from Africa to the Middle East to Asia should include efforts to achieve gender equality, the experts' report stressed, adding that some countries "need to pay special attention to the situation of girls and women, who tend to face major legal, social and political barriers and biases".

Entitled, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, the report was submitted today to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. It includes practical recommendations and "Quick Win" actions to save and improve millions of lives, promote economic growth and convert the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from ambition to concretely achievable actions.

Among the report's 10 key recommendations is that developing countries should adopt MDG-based poverty reduction strategies, and that "specific interventions to address gender inequality should be an intrinsic part of all MDG-based investment packages." They should address systemic challenges, such as protection of reproductive health and rights, including family planning and sexual health; equal access to economic assets; increased access to schooling for girls; equal work opportunities; freedom from violence; and increased representation at all levels of governance. Poor nations' efforts to escape poverty, the report adds, are helped by voluntary family planning, "which promotes greater investments in the health, nutrition, and education of each child".

The Millennium Project was commissioned by Secretary-General Annan to propose the best strategies for achieving the MDGs adopted in September 2000 by the largest gathering of world leaders. Among its key recommendations is that MDG-based poverty reduction strategies should focus on gender equality; women's and girls' health (including reproductive health) and education outcomes; access to economic and political opportunities; right to control assets; and freedom from violence.

The report's "Quick Wins" -- priority public investments to empower poor people and actions that could bring "breathhtaking results within three or fewer years" -- include:

- Expanding access to sexual and reproductive health and information and services, including family planning and contraceptive information and services, and closing existing funding gaps for supplies and logistics;
- Empowering women to play a central role in formulating and monitoring MDG-based poverty reduction strategies and other critical policy reforms;
- Reforming and enforcing laws guaranteeing women and girls property and inheritance rights;
- Launching national campaigns to reduce violence against women; and
- Eliminating school and uniform fees to ensure that all children, especially girls, are not out of school because of their families' poverty.

Investing in Development also urges donors to help developing countries promote overlooked priorities, such as maternal health, gender equality and reproductive health. Maternal mortality, it warns, remains unacceptably high in every region, reflecting low public attention to women's needs and inadequate access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including emergency obstetric services.

Ultimately, the development experts report, the key to achieving the MDGs is to ensure that each person has the essential means to a productive life: human capital, essential infrastructure and core political, social and economic rights. Key elements of human capital include, among others, nutrition, a good health system, sexual and reproductive health and education. Core rights, the experts add, include equal rights, including reproductive rights, for women and girls; freedom from violence, especially for girls and women and a political voice for every citizen.

UNFPA is promoting poverty reduction and development by helping developing nations to address women's empowerment; reduce maternal deaths; prevent HIV/AIDS; and eliminate gender disparity in education.

**Contact information:**

Omar Gharzeddine

Tel.: +1 (212) 297-5028

Email: [gharzeddine@unfpa.org](mailto:gharzeddine@unfpa.org)

---

**Related Links:**

- [Luncheon Meeting to Launch the Reports of the UN Millennium Project](#)