

JUST Notes
SPECIAL ISSUE ON

Millennium Development Goal #3
Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

March 2009

As Sisters of St. Joseph, we yearn to embrace the entire world and all its peoples with the healing power of God's great love. We promise to stand with people who are poor by working with others to alleviate conditions of poverty and oppression.

*-- Promise Chapter 2006
Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange*

EARTH CHARTER

PRINCIPLE III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- 11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.**
- a. Secure the human rights of women and girls and end all violence against them.
 - b. Promote the active participation of women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life as full and equal partners, decision makers, leaders, and beneficiaries.
 - c. Strengthen families and ensure the safety and loving nurture of all family members.

MARCH 8TH IS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

NOTE:

If you have no time to read the entire JUST Notes, click on the following links to watch short videos on the global empowerment of women:

"Let's End Violence against Women" <http://www.unifem.org/resources/audiovideo/detail.php?VideoID=2>

"Gender-Responsive Budgeting - Bolivia" <http://www.unifem.org/resources/audiovideo/detail.php?VideoID=7>

"From Peace to Politics: Burundian Women Take Charge"
<http://www.unifem.org/resources/audiovideo/detail.php?VideoID=4>

BACKGROUND

The eight Millennium Development Goals have been adopted by the international community as a framework for the development activities of over 190 countries in ten regions; they have been articulated into over 20 targets and over 60 indicators.

Adapted from UN MDGs Report 2008

The MDGs, adopted after the 2000 Millennium Summit, mark the first time the international community has embraced a common set of basic development goals on poverty, education, gender, child mortality, maternal health, epidemic diseases, environmental sustainability and development financing.

– Adapted from UNIFEM.org

The target of MDG #3 is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

– Adapted from UN MDGs Report 2008

All eight MDGs touch essential aspects of women's well being; women's advancement is in turn critical for achieving the goals.

– Adapted from UNIFEM.org

PROGRESS NEEDED IN ADVANCING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

- Two-thirds of the world's 799 million illiterate adults ages 15 and over are women.
- Many children in developing countries start life without adequate means of nutrition, learning, and protection. Women and girls are particularly challenged.

- Some 67 countries have primary school attendance and enrolment rates for girls less than 85 per cent. Globally, there are just 96 girls for every 100 boys in primary school, with disparities at the secondary level even more acute. Yet uneducated girls are more at risk than boys to become marginalized. They are more vulnerable to exploitation. They are more likely than educated girls to contract HIV/AIDS, which spreads twice as quickly among uneducated girls than among girls that have even some schooling. Nearly a third of all adults living with HIV/AIDS are under the age of 25, and almost two thirds of these people are women.
- As unschooled adults, these girls will be less likely to have a say socially and politically and to be able to support themselves. Women's rights and access to land, credit and education are limited not only due to legal discrimination, but because more subtle barriers such as their work load, mobility and low bargaining position in the household and community prevent them from taking advantage of their legal rights. These problems affect their children: Women earn only one tenth of the world's income and own less than one percent of property, so households without a male are at special risk of impoverishment. These women will also be less likely to immunize their children and know how to help them survive.
- Gender bias undercuts women's rights in other areas. Practices such as early marriage or poor health services result in high rates of maternal mortality. Some 529,000 women died giving birth last year, 99 percent of them in developing countries. For each birth-related death, 30 other women were injured or disabled. Having a missing or disabled mother severely undercuts a child's chances of survival and health as well.

--Adapted from UNICEF

PROGRESS UPDATE 2008

- Of the 113 countries that failed to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment by the target date of 2005, only 18 are likely to achieve the goal by 2015. Girls account for 55 percent of the out-of-school population.

-- Adapted from the UN Department of Public Information
- In Western and Central Africa, where high repetition and low retention rates are common, girls in particular fail to enroll in and stay in school due to drought, food shortages, armed conflict and poverty.

– Adapted from UN MDGs Report 2008
- Child labor, HIV and AIDS contribute to low school enrolment and high dropout rates for both boys and girls in those sub regions, but prove to be especially devastating for girls.
- Girls in rural areas and from the poorest households require targeted interventions to encourage them to enroll in and stay in school. Satellite schools in remote areas, eliminating school fees, providing school meals, constructing separate sanitation facilities, ensuring a safe school environment and promoting later marriage have boosted girls' attendance in school.
- Women are also disproportionately represented in part-time, seasonal and short-term informal jobs and therefore are deprived of job security and benefits. Occupations continue to be gender-specific, and female dominated positions tend to be characterized by inferior status, lower pay and poorer working conditions. Although well-educated women have advanced and the share of women managers is increasing, most women remain in low-status, less valued jobs and face greater barriers to higher-level positions.
- Women account, on average, for half of those in refugee camps, but their participation in camp decision-making processes remains low. Data from more than 80 camps show that equal participation has been achieved in only about two of five camps. More recent data, however, from 2005 and 2007, indicate that women's political participation in refugee camps is increasing.

– Adapted from UN MDGs Report 2008
- Since 1991, a growing number of women's groups and civil society organizations from more than one hundred countries have taken part in the campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence", tackling all forms of violence against women, such as domestic violence, sexual violence in armed conflict, and female genital mutilation/cutting. The "16 Days" run from 25 November, the International

Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, through 10 December, Human Rights Day.

-- Adapted from the UN Department of Public Information

- Since 2000, the proportion of seats for women in »» parliaments only increased from 13.5 to 17.9 per cent. Women occupy at least 30 per cent of parliamentary seats in 20 countries, although none of these countries are in Asia.
-- Adapted from the UN Department of Public Information
- Despite some gains, violence against women remains an obstacle to the achievement of the MDGs. Studies show that incidents of gender violence can result in loss of household income equivalent to 25-30 percent of the monthly income of poor households.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- Scale up actions, increase financial resources and support governments to accelerate the achievement of the MDG targets that equally benefit and empower women and girls, and ensure their access to education and health services, full and decent employment, and equal political participation and decision-making in all sectors.
- Support women entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas, including through improved access to property and economic assets, microfinance, agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, training and markets.
- Guarantee women's land and property rights through legal reforms.
- Raise public awareness to reduce girls' domestic responsibilities and prevent early marriage and pregnancy.
- Adopt comprehensive laws on all forms of violence against women and support awareness raising campaigns to prevent violence against women and girls.
- Increase funding to provide adequate services and access to justice and redress to victims of violence against women. Ensure a supportive environment to encourage the enrolment of girls in school and reduce absenteeism and drop-out rates.
- Hire more female teachers to act as role models and to promote girls' school attendance.
- Promote gender-sensitive curricula and provide gender sensitization programs for teachers and school officials.
- Ensure that girls are provided with transportation to and from school.
- Provide separate school sanitation facilities for girls and boys.
- Enhance non-formal education for girls and women, such as vocational or skills training and literacy programs.
- Ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and ILO Conventions on Equal Remuneration, Discrimination, Workers with Family Responsibilities, and Maternity Protection.
- Step-up efforts to implement decent work principles, such as social protection and freedom from harassment.
- Enhance the participation of women at all levels of government and their role in other decision-making positions in the judiciary, the private sector, civil society and the media.

-- Adapted from the UN Department of Public Information

PRAYER

Moral Challenge: A Prayer

In a world where so many go hungry,
let us make the fruits of Creation.
In a world where one billion of our brothers
and sisters
do not have safe drinking water,
let us help the waters run clear.
In a world where so many children
die so young,
and so many mothers die in childbirth,
and so many families
are ravaged by disease,
let us bring health and healing.
In a world where women carry

such heavy burdens,
let us recognize and restore
the rights of all.
let us join together,
with a new sense of global community,
a new awareness
of our need for one another
and for this fragile planet,
to meet the clear challenges
of the Millennium Goals,
to bring hope as substantial as bread,
to make human dignity
as visible as wheat in the fields.

-Adapted from Education for Justice

TAKE ACTION

- **Raise public awareness** Watch “*Child Brides: Stolen Lives*” on line.
<http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/341/index.html> A closer look at early child marriage around the world, tales of heartbreak and of hope. Take action after watching the film by clicking here:
<http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/341/take-action.html#Education>
- **Support awareness raising campaigns** Invite others to watch with you “*A Powerful Noise*” on March 5, 2009
[http://www.fathomevents.com/details.aspx?eventid=769&utm_source=GoogleCPC&utm_medium=CP
C_G&utm_campaign=APowerfulNoise&gclid=ClzDwNTEexpqCFRBbagodXh1B0g](http://www.fathomevents.com/details.aspx?eventid=769&utm_source=GoogleCPC&utm_medium=CP&utm_campaign=APowerfulNoise&gclid=ClzDwNTEexpqCFRBbagodXh1B0g) This film event celebrates International Women’s Day and highlights the important role that women play in bringing lasting solutions to global poverty. Broadcast live from New York City, this inspiring event will take place in select movie theatres nationwide on Thursday, March 5, 2009
- **Support women entrepreneurship** Participate in KIVA <http://www.kiva.org/> KIVA provides an opportunity for participate in a micro-lending program, and at the same time, empowers individuals to lend directly to unique entrepreneurs in the developing world.
- **Increase funding to provide adequate services to victims of violence** Donate or participate in Women for Women International who help women survivors of war in rebuilding their lives.
<http://www.womenforwomen.org/>
- **Read about promoting gender-sensitive curricula**
<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/GenderEquity1.pdf>
- **Accelerate the achievement of the MDG #3 targets** Learn more about the U.N. Division for the Advancement of Women, DAW. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/> DAW advocates for the improvement of the status of women of the world, and the achievement of their equality with men –as equal actors, partners, and beneficiaries of sustainable development, human rights, peace and security.

Learn more and participate in the following United Nations websites:

- Women Watch - <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>
- United Nations Development for Women - <http://www.unifem.org/>