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Progress on women's rights will help achieve global development goals – Migiro



Deputy Secretary-General Asha Rose Migiro

9 March 2010 – Significant progress in realizing women's rights is crucial to achieving sustainable development and the globally agreed targets to slash poverty, hunger, illiteracy and a host of other socio-economic ills, the Deputy Secretary-General said today.

"Women and girls still face discrimination and disadvantage socially, economically and politically," Asha-Rose Migiro **told** a meeting in preparation for the ministerial review to be held later this year by the United Nations Economic and Social (**ECOSOC**) on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

However, she added, good practices and initiatives exist that can be scaled-up and replicated in many areas.

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is the third of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the anti-poverty targets world leaders have pledged to attain by 2015.

Ms. Migiro noted that many countries recognize that women are more likely to be living in poverty and have increased social safety nets, often as part of larger efforts to reduce women's vulnerability to poverty.

Progress is being made toward gender parity in primary schooling, and in some countries women outnumber men in tertiary education, she pointed out.

At the same time, females represent two thirds of the world's illiterate people. Conditional cash transfer programmes that provide incentives for attendance in education are among the strategies that countries are employing to change this.

"We must use the lessons from these programmes to design and implement the next generation of policies that combine even greater incentives for education with smarter strategies to eliminate gender stereotypes," said the Deputy Secretary-General.

She also called for boosting women's access to decision-making in society, noting that women comprise more than 30 per cent of the representatives in the national parliaments of only 25 countries.

"Quotas for women have been useful, but countries must also show innovation in applying strategies and targets for women's participation in all areas of decision-making in the public and private sectors."

Women must also have a far greater role in the resolution of armed conflicts and peacebuilding, and must be fully included in the post-conflict development of governments, institutions and civil society, she added.

"When women and girls have the same freedoms and rights as men and boys, we will have more stable economies and stronger more peaceful societies."

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