

Background Sheet One

Did you know...?

Around 70% of the 1.3 billion people who live in extreme poverty, on less than one dollar a day, are women and girls.

Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours, produce half of the world's food, and yet earn only 10% of the world's income.

Two-thirds of children denied primary education are girls, and 75% of the world's 876 million illiterate adults are women. In tertiary education a mere 5-10% of students in low income countries are female.

More than half a million women die in pregnancy and childbirth every year: of these deaths, 99% are in developing countries. In parts of Africa, maternal mortality rates are 1 in 16. (UN)

Women hold only 14% of parliamentary seats worldwide, and only 8% of the world's cabinet ministers are women. (UNIFEM)

Domestic violence is the biggest cause of injury and death to women worldwide. Gender-based violence causes more deaths and disability among women aged 15 to 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents, and war. (World Bank Discussion Paper)

Total agricultural outputs in sub-Saharan Africa could increase by 6-20% if women's access to agricultural inputs was equal to men's

The HIV epidemic is continuing to spread, with four million new infections each year (one every 8 seconds) - most of them women. Among 15-24 year olds with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, women outnumber men three to one. (DFID)

“As study after study has taught us, there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce child and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation.”

Kofi Annan. 2007