

PROGRESS OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN 2008/2009

Who Answers to Women?

GENDER & ACCOUNTABILITY



Launch Event: Thursday, 18 September 2008

**Panel discussion featuring
Special Guest: Mr. Ban Ki-moon,
United Nations Secretary-General**

**Chair: Ms. Ines Alberdi,
UNIFEM Executive Director**

**Time & Venue: 12 - 2 pm
United Nations Delegates Dining Room**

Who answers to women? Progress 2008 shows that realizing women's rights and achieving the Millennium Development Goals depends on strengthening accountability for commitments to women and gender equality. The examples highlighted throughout the Report suggest that there is reason for optimism. In the past decade, there has been marked improvement in responses to women's needs. But vast and daunting accountability challenges remain at both the national and international levels. *Progress 2008* demonstrates that for women's rights to translate into substantive improvements in their lives, and for gender equality to be realized in practice, women must be able to fully participate in public decision-making at all levels and hold those responsible to account when their rights are infringed or their needs ignored. Published at the half-way point to the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, Progress presents new data providing clear evidence that women's empowerment and gender equality are drivers for reducing poverty, building food security, reducing maternal mortality, safeguarding the environment, and enhancing the effectiveness of aid.



Chapter 1: Who Answers to Women?

Chapter 1 focuses on the critical links between government accountability to women and gender equality. It argues that government commitments to gender equality are important, but they are likely to remain mere words on paper unless supported by adequate accountability mechanisms. Progress 2008 understands accountability as the capacity of citizens – in this case women – to ask for explanations and information regarding government actions; where necessary, to initiate investigations or to get compensation; and to see officials sanctioned, if they have failed to respond to women's needs or protect their rights.

Chapter 2: Politics

Women's direct engagement in public decision-making has long been seen not just as a matter of democratic justice, but as a means of ensuring better government accountability to women. Yet increasing the numbers of women in politics is not sufficient to ensure better public sector responsiveness to women's needs. Rather, what is required are gender-sensitive good governance reforms that will make all elected politicians more effective at promoting gender equality in public policy and at ensuring that policies are implemented.



Chapter 3: Services

The delivery of public services is where women experience accountable and responsive governance – or its absence – most directly. If women enjoy access to appropriate and good quality services, it is likely that public resource managers and public service delivery staff are informed of women's needs, and that women as citizens are able to influence decisions over the allocation of public resources. This chapter takes an in-depth look at accountability as the critical underlying factor in ensuring women's access to public services.

Chapter 4: Markets

Women's everyday lives are increasingly shaped by the dynamics of the private sector, yet many of the assumptions about accountability made in the previous chapters do not hold true in this area, where decisions are often shaped by the principles of free trade and free financial flows and the diminishing role of organized labor. Nevertheless, women are learning to leverage their collective rights as workers and consumers in order to achieve important shifts in corporate practices. This chapter looks at the changing nature of accountability relationships in a globalized world and their implications for women.



Chapter 5: Justice

Women's contribution to building the accountability of the judicial system to all citizens has come in large part from the insistence that justice starts at home, and that courts and the judiciary have a critical role to play in ensuring that the legal framework is applied fully, justly and evenly to benefit all individuals. Yet even as the number of equal rights and anti-discrimination statutes has grown at both the national and the international levels in recent years, many of these face considerable enforcement challenges. This chapter examines the role and effectiveness of formal and informal justice systems as vehicles of accountability for women.

Chapter 6: Aid & Security

Multilateral organizations and international security institutions have a critical role to play in supporting countries to enhance their accountability to implement national commitments and track investments for gender equality. But the record of these organizations in complying with their own gender equality policies often falls far short of expectations. This chapter examines the changing context of aid and the role of international development and security organizations in assisting countries to meet promises to achieve gender equality in development and peace building.



MDGs & Gender

Part II of Progress 2008 contains a succinct review of each of the eight MDGs from a gender equality perspective. In 2008, governments around the world are raising the alarm at the lack of progress in keeping to the timetable of achieving the MDGs by 2015. The analysis in Part II confirms that the least progress is being seen in efforts to build gender equality and advance women's empowerment in all areas except education. More alarming, many countries still lack information regarding their progress and many more do not report sex-disaggregated data.

