



World Chronicle

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UNFPA "State of the World Population 2005"
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"The Promise of Equality"

This year's State of the World Population Report published by the UN Fund for Population carries a simple but powerful message: Gender equality reduces poverty, saves and improves lives.

Gender equality, reproductive health and gender-based violence are among the major issues emphasized in the report. Why the focus on women's welfare? What are the strategies for empowering women that would lead to poverty reduction? As women become educated, they are more likely to delay marriage and childbirth, often choosing to have smaller families as well; they are more likely to join the workforce and can defend themselves against violence more effectively.

How is such progress for women linked to the progress of developed and developing countries? This edition of World Chronicle will explore the focus, strategies and possible impacts of the report with its principal author, María José Alcalá.

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ANNOUNCER: From the United Nations in New York, an interview programme on major global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

JENKINS: Hello, I'm Tony Jenkins. When women become educated, they are likely to delay marriage and childbirth; they are likely to join the labour force and choose to have smaller families and they are likely to better defend themselves against violence.

Gender Equality and Reproductive Health are the focus for this year's State of the World Population report issued by the UN Population Fund, UNFPA. Why these issues now? And what is the overriding message? In the studio with us today is the report's principal author, María José Alcalá. Welcome to **World Chronicle**.

Let me get one of the main questions that I often hear, when it comes to this sort of thing, out of the way, right at the top. Your report says you have a simple message - gender equality reduces poverty, and saves and improves lives. You're on this issue of gender equality, and some people said to me this is a report that's supposed to be about population and reproductive health. Why are you dealing with these issues of development? There's UNIFEM to deal with women; there's UNAIDS to deal with AIDS; there's UNDP to deal with development issues. Why are you dealing with all these issues in your report?

ALCALÁ: Well, gender equality is everybody's business. It's a mandate that the entire UN system and the entire international community must be concerned with. And perhaps one of critical areas of development is precisely population issues with gender equality and women's empowerment as central. If you're concerned with population issues, you must be concerned with women's rights.

JENKINS: And what you try to say in this report essentially is that gender equality is the cornerstone on which you can actually build a campaign to tackle the issue of population growth?

ALCALÁ: It's absolutely central. If women are not empowered to choose the number of children they are having, it has obvious implications for population dynamics and growth. If women are not able to choose and access family planning and exercise that fundamental right, they are not able to enter socio-economic

activities to the fullest extent possible. It really robs countries when you discriminate against women from the possibilities of reducing poverty, balancing population dynamics with the resource base and the environment.

JENKINS: We are joined in the studio today by Joe Lauria of *The Boston Globe* and Laura Angela Bagnetto of the *Saudi Press Agency*. Joe...

LAURIA: To follow up on that, I'm not sure exactly where to begin, at the risk of sounding like a male chauvinist pig, I would like to know what you think about this. It seems like a UNIFEM report; many people will say that you may have ignored the problems of men, who are part of the world population, at least the last time I looked! And they have their own problems, not only in relation to women. I mean, you're talking about the lack of education for women and economic exploitation. Men in developing world probably have a lot worse lives than women in developed world do. Have you ignored and why, it seems to me, have you ignored men's issues? They have their own health problems as well but it's not in the report, why?

ALCALÁ: In fact one entire chapter is devoted to the issue of men and boys. Men and boys, not in relation to women only but men have also rights and needs. They have need for information for HIV prevention. They have needs to understand issues about sexual health and preventing sexually transmitted infections. The report presents data, for example, especially in the issues of poverty. There are studies coming out of Sub-Saharan Africa, where half of rural men don't even know where to go to get condoms. We have young men who are really driving part of the epidemic today who lack information. Prevention programmes are insufficient to reach young men, to reach them in ways that resonate with them. We need to tailor programmes for women and for men based on the different gender perspectives that each sex is used to by society.

BAGNETTO: Well... I actually beg to differ with my colleague because when I read the report, I thought that it really did stress the importance of men in women's lives especially with women's issues of reproduction and childcare, and I wanted to ask you about what has pushed men to the front of the equation, whereas before they were definitely not considered?

ALCALÁ: It's true that the women's movement started by focusing on women exclusively to the exclusion of men but it's obvious that if you want to stop HIV/AIDS, if you want to stop violence against women, if you want to have better nurturing parents, both mothers and fathers for children, you must involve men. So there has been an emergence of studies and work undergoing the last 15 years or so that are really trying to understand what are the societal pressures placed on men that may inhibit some of their better roles, as nurturing fathers, as better husbands to end violence against women, to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

JENKINS: We've touched on an awful lot right at the get go, but before we go any further, let's take a look at this report...

VIDEO AND AUDIO IN

NARRATION: Girls in Afghanistan are slowly getting back to school. In many parts of the country, improved access to health care is helping to reduce the country's very high maternal mortality. But gender discrimination is pervasive in Afghanistan; it affects the poorest women in the poorest countries the most. Investments that enable girls and women to reach their full potential can foster significant economic growth, and reduce inequities, within and among countries, argues the United Nations Population Fund's 2005 State of World Population Report, released one month after the World Summit in New York where leaders promised to reduce extreme poverty.

KOFI ANNAN: ... and progress on development will be matched by commitments to good governance and national plans to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015...

NARRATION: Improving the situation of women and girls requires investments in health and education. Reproductive health is a human right. Yet because of gender discrimination, women and girls pay the highest price – too often with their own lives. Childbirth is one of the leading causes of death... and illness for women living in poor countries. Each year over 500,000 women die from childbirth and from related complications. As health care becomes more available in Bangladesh, women are

having fewer children, improving their health and offering hopes for a better future for their families. This government-run clinic, along with 64 others supported by the UNFPA, offers free maternal care, including family planning and emergency services. Fewer mothers are dying now. Education also helps girls and the communities where they live break out of a cycle of poverty. Gender equality also means ending violence against women and girls.

NARRATION: In Sierra Leone, years of fighting between government forces and rebel soldiers resulted in wholesale terror. Although the war formally ended in 2002, the scars remain.

DR. FRANK NYAMA (SIERRA LEONE): These are sexually transmitted disease patients because these were girls who were affected by the war. They were gang raped and sexually abused.

NARRATION: Achieving gender equality requires investment in education for all children; equal access to reproductive health; equal participation of women in civil, economic and political life; and implementation of internationally-agreed laws protecting human rights. For tens of millions of women, these are issues of life and death.

VIDEO AND AUDIO OUT

JENKINS: Now María José, in all of those programmes, which look like they're extremely effective, the crucial thing, of course, is money. And as we've heard consistently this year, when it comes to the Millennium Development Goals there's a great risk of the International community not meeting its obligations because the money isn't there. And there are areas where there's problem because they are controversial. It is you getting the money that you need, UNFPA getting the money it needs for family planning purposes. Especially since in the United States there's a concern about abortion. Do have enough money to do the work that you need to do? Is there a huge shortfall, what's the situation now?

ALCALÁ: Well, the glass is half full, we've been quite fortunate this year and last year. And this year, we have a record high of 166 governments giving us pledges. So for us it's a very strong sign, both politically and financially that the agenda of our organization remains absolutely critical for poverty reduction. And on the other hand,

there has been a lot of good news this year on resource commitment stepping up to the plate. The European Union has stepped up to the plate to double overseas development assistance. We've had the G8 Summit which was great news for developing countries struggling with poverty. Debt relief commitments are also being made. So now we really have to hold them accountable to come through with those resources.

JENKINS: You didn't answer the second half of the question about people refusing to fund the controversial side of your work because...

ALCALÁ: ... Well, for family planning, we've a lot of donors supporting us to make sure that the poorest countries have access to basic commodities – condoms, contraceptives...

JENKINS: You mentioned condoms, we've heard reports recently that in Uganda, which is after all the showcase in Africa on how to deal with AIDS, there's a shortage of condoms, and the Ugandans are blaming the international community. Are they right?

ALCALÁ: The situation in Uganda reflects condom shortage. It's one of the issues that really raise the alarm bells in the report. I mean in 2003, they had statistics that if all donor support for the entire year were evenly distributed, each African man would have 6 condoms for the entire year. Critical is bringing enough condoms to the poorest communities and countries if they are really serious about halting AIDS.

JENKINS: Laura...

BAGNETTO: I just wanted to piggyback on that because one of the parts of your report is that it's not as simple as ABC, which is Abstain from sex, Be faithful to one partner or use Condoms. And that's exactly what the Bush administration has been pushing in Uganda. So I was wondering and I noticed that in doing research that you did deal with North America and the United States, what is their reaction to some of the positions that you have in this report?

ALCALÁ: The point made in the report about the ABC approach is that undoubtedly, it has reached many people with critical information and improved the knowledge base on how to prevent HIV. The main point made in the report is that ABC

must pay attention on the situation of women and girls. Women today are the face of HIV/AIDS. The epidemic began in the 80s primarily among men. Today the face of AIDS is increasingly female, increasingly young. We know that today 75 per cent of all cases of HIV are transmitted between men and women. That shows men's decision taking control and how women are not able to say no. We know high rates of sexual violence against women including young women. So clearly if ABC or any other approach to HIV prevention is going to work it must take into account the importance of empowering women and girls to protect themselves.

LAURIA: Haven't you also ignored the problems of developed, rich countries? For example, Germany and Japan maybe experiencing depopulation. And there's an issue of migration, if you want to talk about women-specific issues, what about migration? Why isn't the developed world, part of the world population?

ALCALÁ: The report this year focuses very much on poverty reduction. Now the whole issue in some of the developed countries – concerns about depopulation, increasing aging population and so forth – the bottom line that's being made in the report is that every woman, rich or poor, whether you live in a rich or poor country, has the right to access family planning, has the right to choose the number of child she wants to have, and to be supported. Both men and women need to be supported in balancing the burden of productive roles and taking care of family responsibilities, and it's a fundamental issue addressed in the report.

LAURIA: ... We know who has the money, we know who you have to appeal to and those are the Republicans in the United States. Let's face it, they have the fate of the world in their hands, at least in short-term, as long as they are in power. Now they look at this report, they are going to see it's about women and it's about the third world. It's some "lefty-pinko" thing they're not interested in. Didn't you have them in mind when you wrote this?

ALCALÁ: The report refers to the entire commitments that have been reaffirmed yet again at the World Summit just a few weeks ago with heads of states. All the governments of the world including the U.S. participated in those commitments and they made the same commitments to the resources, to the issues of gender equality...

LAURIA: ... But they didn't want to lose their 0.7, the U.S. refuses that...

ALCALÁ: ... It's still referred to in the World Summit document and what we're referring to is the global commitment. The U.S. is not the "owner donor" in the world; they've been a primary supporter of population issues for decades. The European Union has stepped up with their commitments to ODA, Overseas Development Assistance, and we hope that the entire donor community comes through with their respect of commitments for this agenda.

JENKINS: ... ah... Laura...

BAGNETTO: I also wanted to ask you about, there's one part of the report that talks about girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are using sugar daddies - older men who give them money for their school fees and for sexual favours. And the bottom line in that section is that girls need to be educated to know that they can't contract HIV from these older men. But it seems like the actual problem is really the problem of sugar daddies that it exists in Sub-Saharan Africa just to pay for the school fees and to eat. How would you deal with that?

ALCALÁ: The sugar daddies phenomenon is quite acute and some of the studies coming out are quite alarming. The number of teenage girls between 15-19 year old involved in this kind of sex for survival to get to school – the main issue there is poverty. This occurs in the context of poverty. And if the girls are not given equal opportunities to stay in school and to be able to get better income earning possibilities, this is going to continue fueling the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Now, there are some solutions that some of the countries are coming up with. They are throwing campaigns alerting the girls but are also starting a social intolerance and un-acceptance of these men taking advantage of these poor girls.

JENKINS: This is **World Chronicle**. We are talking with María José Alcalá about the state of the world's population. According to this new report, one in three women has been beaten, or abused. Gender-based violence is a pervasive problem, one that is especially difficult to fight in societies with a recent history of conflict... and where men, by tradition, have a very dominant role in society. The UNFPA, in partnership with the Government of Honduras, has launched one of the region's most innovative programmes... to better train police in their response to violence against women.

Let's take a look...

VIDEO AND AUDIO IN

NARRATION: In this training centre in Honduras, police are practicing riot control for violent demonstrations that may never take place. They're also rehearsing how to deal with a problem they've seen countless times before – one they are sure to face again: domestic violence. In a country where some 15% percent of women over the age of 14 are thought to have suffered from physical abuse, and many more have experienced other forms of intimidation, this training is part of a recent effort to improve police response to violence against women. For the country's police corps, this marks a revolutionary change from the past. Maria Amalia Reyes was 20 years old when she married her first husband, a policeman with a notorious group called the Cobras.

MARIA AMALIA REYES: ... he would get drunk, he would beat me, he would put his gun inside my mouth and tell me if you yell I'll kill you -- and I'll leave your brains splattered on the walls.

NARRATION: Things began to change in Honduras when a law aimed at protecting women from violence was passed in 1998. Then it became a question of how to change attitudes to help the police to enforce this law.

SGT. FRANCISCO JAVIER TORRES: We as authorities have to start changing, in our own households, because if there is domestic violence in our own homes then our children will see this and do the same thing when they're grown, so if we don't change this mentality it will never end.

NARRATION: The country's police academies currently graduate 1,400 officers each year. Many are women. And all – regardless of gender or seniority -- have received several years of classroom training on domestic violence. The curriculum is designed by the National Institute for Women, with support from the United Nations Population Fund. The country's first police officer with a master's degree in gender and education is Doris Cortes.

INSP. DORIS CORTES: It's a very relevant topic, these days, because the police have always had to deal with all types of violence, except that before there was no law that treated domestic violence as a crime. Now we're available on immediate notice to whoever calls.

NARRATION: To help improve the quality of police response, the Government of Honduras has also introduced a new telephone hotline 114, where anonymous reports of domestic abuse are answered by a group of counselors. Offering emotional support and legal advice to callers, the 114 counselors – who cannot be identified on camera for their own safety – will also refer the call to the police dispatcher, so a patrol can be sent immediately to deal with the situation. Honduras' Minister for Security, Oscar Alvarez.

OSCAR ALVAREZ: We have seen what we call in statistics a J-curve. So in the beginning there were not many reports of domestic violence but now with the new hotline the curve goes higher and higher, which means, scientifically, that it's building confidence for people to report these cases.

NARRATION: building confidence for the victims themselves to report violence remains one of the long-term challenges... this woman was ashamed to report the abuse she endured.

VICTIM: He would call us bitches and fat pigs, he told us to work, he'd hit me (sobs) he was abusive to my family – it was painful, especially for my mother, he was abusive to her, to my girl, to his own children -- everything I did bothered him, I couldn't have anybody visit me in the house, and yes, I did suffer a lot, for 9 years."

NARRATION: Her husband, now dead from AIDS, has left her infected with HIV.

MARIA AMALIA REYES: Our struggle is above all just for survival, in this country, Honduras, because our history is based in the macho culture of the men and the sacrifice of us women.

NARRATION: The underlying causes of despair, like poverty, and the country's painful history of violence among family members will not be erased by police training. But it's a good start... and just like Maria Amalia's effort to build a self-help group for women, it could be a promising sign for the future.

VIDEO AND AUDIO OUT

JENKINS: Interesting... of course, I guess maybe a lot of people will be shocked to see that. I guess they think violence going hand in hand with poverty, which it often does, but I noticed in your report, that in the United States, this is a problem that affects every developed nation. In United States alone, in your estimates, it costs \$12.6 billion in domestic violence. To what extent is your message being heard? Especially in the sort of countries that we saw in the report where, which are macho societies, where culturally women are supposed to have a secondary role? After all, this goes to the heart of your report about gender equality – what kind of a reaction are you getting?

ALCALÁ: Violence against women remains a silent epidemic of alarming proportions whether you're talking about rich or poor countries. The good news is, there has been a lot of countries, a lot of developing countries launching national campaigns against violence against women. Even some of the poorest countries coming out of post conflict situations, they have launched campaigns. They have launched national plans of actions. They're training police. They're training judiciary. They're mobilizing communities...

JENKINS: Why?

ALCALÁ: Because there's a recognition that violence against woman is not only a fundamental human rights issue but it also has links to, as you mentioned, the cost of public budgets can run into billions of dollars. The pressure put on health systems, police and enforcement systems can be tremendous. And, of course, we have to remember the tremendous impact of violence against women on women's health, and on female workforce participation and productivity. So there's even an economic cost attached to violence against women beyond the suffering that it costs.

JENKINS: But from UNFPA's point of view, otherwise from a population point of view, the bottom line for you surely is - if a woman is getting beaten up by her husband or boyfriend, then she certainly isn't in a position to say no when he wants sex, unprotected sex. Then therefore she has no way to control whether she is going to reproduce or not. Is that the bottom line?

ALCALÁ: ..., No, no, it's not the bottom line for us. We consider violence against women as an absolute human rights violation. We have to remember that violence against women has a tremendous impact on health. Sexual violence can lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Sexual violence leads to other issues of poor reproductive health, higher infant problems, you know, when newborns are born – one in every four women is beaten when they are pregnant. There are tremendous consequences for the newborns and the child's health as well. There are tremendous repercussions.

LAURIA: People in power often think that they are in power because they are somehow innately superior to others, the ones they have power over. Men might think that they are just better than women. And rich people think they are better than poor people. But actually we know that often it's a big lie because often in rich countries, the rich people are rich because everybody is doing the work for them - women serving men, or workers serving owners. How do you, in a practical way, try to change these ingrained attitudes? Whether it be the macho attitude in Honduras, or whether it be a corporation in America thinking that they don't have to pay attention to any labour rights for women and men working in these countries. How do you, in a practical way, approach it to try and change local legislation and education? How do you begin to change these centuries-old attitudes?

ALCALÁ: The report is full of promising initiatives that do just that – social transformations around gender expectations, what it means to be male or female in society. You have to mobilize communities and you have to talk about these issues. You know, in a lot of these societies, these issues are not discussed. It's a given that women and girls are considered of lower value. Male authority is unquestioned. But when you find culturally sensitive ways to bring up the discussions - even with religious leaders taking the lead and you have to find out who are the opinion leaders in the community, so that they become the leaders – so that the voice against violations of women's rights will engage men and boys to take on a shared role with women. And we've seen positive change the world over, even in some of the more conservative societies.

LAURIA: How do you get in touch with those opinions? By watching this show for example...

ALCALÁ: Unfortunately they don't have access! It's really a dialogue. It's a gradual process. You can't change bad attitudes towards women overnight. But you talk to the young people. You talk to the women. You talk to the men's groups. You talk to religious leaders. And gradually there's a greater understanding of how these issues of gender impact the community as a whole on family well being.

BAGNETTO: And I just wanted to touch on that because there was an interesting part of the report that talked about things like bride-napping, which has been a tradition for years. And with dialogue, seems like things were starting to turn around. Have you noticed that with other traditional societies, not from the legislative point of view but to the basic with the mother, father...

ALCALÁ: Yes, for example, there's a success story on female genital mutilation, which has a long tradition. It is considered in the best interest of the girl if female genital mutilation is performed on her. And we have examples where female genital mutilation has dropped considerably because the elders and the religious leaders came on board. We've other examples where child marriage is entrenched. Again, you know, through dialogue with the religious leaders. It's just changing their perceptions. The importance of keeping girls in school, it's good for the community, it's good for the country as a whole. So there are ways to change it and there are good examples that show how to do it.

JENKINS: We don't have much time left but there was a report on the New York Times recently about how men, certainly in this country in the United States, who are in tune with feminism, are confused. In other words, they see the advantage of equality with women. It has made their lives richer but at the same time it has taken away some of the traditional roles which they used to use to define their identities. And with that gone, they are left... we poor creatures are left confused. How seriously do you take that issue?

ALCALÁ: I don't take that very seriously because there are actually reports that show - including in some of the countries we're talking about that are more traditional -

that men get satisfaction and gain from spending more time with children. They understand the importance of allowing women to work outside the home, to share in other social and economic activities. The men themselves are reporting greater satisfaction. There's greater harmony within the couple, within the family.

JENKINS: Well, on that happy note, that's all the time that we have left. Thank you for being with us. Our guest has been the Principle Author of this year's State of World Population Report, María José Alcalá. She was interviewed by Joe Lauria of *The Boston Globe* and Laura Angela Bagnetto of the *Saudi Press Agency*... I'm Tony Jenkins, inviting you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

ANNOUNCER: Electronic transcripts of this programme may be obtained free of charge by contacting World Chronicle at the address on your screen:

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