

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

MESSAGE ON WORLD POPULATION DAY

11 July 2009

In the midst of the worst global economic crisis in generations, we must find the most effective ways to continue progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. There is no better path than the focus of this year's World Population Day: investing in women and girls.

As budgets tighten, the crisis threatens to wipe out hard-won progress in improving health and reducing poverty. When household incomes decline, girls are more likely to drop out of school. When profits decline, women are more likely to lose their employment and sources of income. When health systems suffer, women risk childbirth without life-saving services. Even before the crisis, a mother died every minute in pregnancy and childbirth, nearly all in developing countries where the crisis has pushed women deeper into poverty.

Investing in girls' education delivers well-known returns. When girls are educated, they are more likely to earn higher wages and obtain better jobs, to have fewer and healthier children and to enjoy safer childbirth.

And investing in women's health, especially reproductive health, can not only save the lives of half a million mothers, but also unleash an estimated \$15 billion in productivity each year. As we commemorate the 15th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, let us accelerate efforts to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

On this World Population Day, I call on decision-makers to protect women's ability to earn income, keep their daughters in school, and obtain reproductive health information and services, including voluntary family planning. Together, let us advance the rights of women and girls, and empower them as highly productive members of society capable of contributing to economic recovery and growth. There can be no better investment on this day or any other.