

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

International Council of Nurses

Geneva, Switzerland, 17 October 2007

On the occasion of the **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**, the International Council of Nurses is drawing attention to the plight of women worldwide. According to the United Nations, 980 million people live on less than one dollar a day.^[1] And a majority of the world's absolute poor - 70% - are female.

Poverty and Health

The poor share an unequal burden of ill health. The poorest 20% of the world's population die from nearly 2/3 of the world's communicable disease, maternal and perinatal mortality, and nutritional deficiencies.^[2]

Poverty is particularly destructive of women's health, especially their reproductive and sexual health: women and girls are often the last to eat; women's health problems are considered less important than other family priorities; girls may be sold into prostitution; over half a million women still die each year from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The odds that a woman will die from these causes in sub-Saharan Africa are 1 in 16 over the course of her lifetime, compared to 1 in 3,800 in the developed world.

A UN Agency for Women

To address the poverty of women and gender inequality in all realms, ICN has joined a swelling coalition calling for the immediate establishment of a UN Agency for Women. The UN and the world need a full-fledged women's agency: robustly funded, operational and with on-the-ground presence in every country. And we need it now. The healthy development of all citizens and communities is inextricably tied to the education and empowerment of women and the strengthening of their health. Where women participate on an equal footing, societies flourish. The absolute importance of gender equity in all realms of life and areas of social and economic development cannot be understated.

"There is no time to lose, no reason to pander to the deeply rooted forces that work against women's empowerment and gender equality. Without a women's agency every global goal, including each of the Millennium Development Goals, will be unreachable," stated ICN President Hiroko Minami.

^[1] United Nations (2007), The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007, New York, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007.pdf>

^[2] The Global Forum for Health Research, The 10/90 Report on Health Research, 1999.

ICN appeals to all - women, men, international agencies, national and regional organisation and governments - for robust support in ensuring the establishment of a well funded, independent gender entity with programme capacity at the country level.

More information on the ICN call for a UN Women's Agency can be found on:
www.icn.ch/waa.htm

Global Theme Issue on Poverty and Human Development

In order to raise awareness and stimulate research into poverty and human development, the Council of Science Editors has organized a Global Theme Issue on Poverty and Human Development. Science journals throughout the world will simultaneously publish papers on this topic of worldwide interest on October 22, 2007. The journals will publish original research, review articles, editorials, perspectives and news stories on the subject of poverty and human development. Some journals will dedicate an entire issue to this subject, others will publish a few papers, and still others plan to publish an editorial. Some journals with less frequent publication schedules plan to release these articles early online to coincide with the common release date. This is an international collaboration with journals from developed and developing countries. More information on the effect of poverty on health can be found on ICN's website:

- Nursing Matters Fact Sheet on Poverty: www.icn.ch/matters_poverty.htm
 - International Nurses Day kit 2004: Working with the Poor against Poverty: www.icn.ch/indkit2004.htm
 - Position Statement on Women's Health: www.icn.ch/pswomen.htm
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