



## Gender Equality: The Right and Smart Thing to Do

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YANGON--- Raising awareness of the challenges of gender equality and creation of better opportunities and conditions for women and girls, are the focus of the Seminar on Gender and Development organized by the World Bank office in Myanmar and co-hosted by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Relief and Resettlement. Two flagship reports released earlier by the World Bank, the "World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development" and the regional companion report entitled "Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific", are focusing attention on the importance of improving women's access to jobs and economic opportunities and of enhancing their voice in society. These reports explore key gender issues around the world and in the region as well as provide recommendations for policy enhancement; we will make a connection between our current policies and guidelines with these recommendations, said Daw Myat Myat Ohn Khin, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. "These reports show that gender equality is important as an integral part of development. Gender equality also contributes to development by raising productivity, improving the prospects for future generations, and enhancing the quality of policies, said Sudhir Shetty, the Director of the World Bank's East Asia and Pacific Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Department and co-director of the World Development Report. From the global perspective, the "World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development", details big strides in narrowing gender gaps but show that disparity remains in many areas. The worst disparity is the rate at which girls and women die relative to men in developing countries. However, the report also notes that the world has made significant progress in narrowing gender gaps in education, health and labor markets over the past 25 years. Disparities between boys and girls in primary education have closed in almost all countries. In secondary education, these gaps are closing rapidly. To ensure that progress on gender equality is sustained, the international community needs to complement domestic policy actions in each of these priority areas. The report recommends that policymakers focus on the most stubborn gender gaps that rising incomes alone cannot solve. It is by fixing those shortcomings that the payoffs to development are likely to be greatest, and where policies changes will make the most difference. As a regional report, "Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific" examines issues that are particularly relevant to the region, including the gender dimensions of several emerging trends: increased global economic integration, the rising use of information and communication technologies, migration, urbanization, and rapid population aging, all of which are generating new opportunities, but also new risks, for promoting gender equality. The report contributes new data and evidence on gender and development, significantly strengthening the ability of countries to formulate evidence-based policy in this area. The report underscores that gender equality in many areas does not happen automatically with growth and development. For this reason, gender-aware public policy is required if countries are to achieve both gender equality and more rapid development. In Myanmar, the government is to be praised for its commitment to change. A series of reforms is underway including the enhancement of gender equality and empowerment which is under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Relief and Resettlement in cooperation with many other key agencies, civil society, academia and the international community. As the country moves towards realizing its national goals, there remains a crucial role for policies aimed at reducing the most costly gender disparities that are non-responsive to growth and those that have a significant impact on vulnerable groups. Myanmar is at a critical juncture for harnessing the forces of economic growth in a way that improves its human development outcomes and ensures that all segments of society can benefit. The World Bank is committed to working closely with the Government of Myanmar to promote gender equality. With continued attention to reducing vulnerabilities and improving opportunities, strong progress in gender-equitable growth and poverty reduction can be achieved for all men and women across Myanmar, said Kanthan Shankar, the World Bank's Country Manager in Myanmar. Media Contacts  
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