

**Launch of the WHO report
"Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda"
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This report brings together the evidence base on the all too common tragedies of avoidable death and unnecessary physical and mental illness that beset millions of women from early childhood to old age across the globe. The root causes of this unacceptable and pervasive situation are gender power relations that place women and girls in subordinate economic, political, legal and cultural positions in families, communities and societies; biased values and norms; inequities in the organizational structures of governments and international organizations, and the mechanisms through which strategies, policies and programmes are designed and implemented.

"Business as usual" is not an option. We cannot continue to waste human capital, weaken social institutions, hamper democratic functioning and deprive more than half of the world's population of their basic human right to health.

"Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda" is crafted to reflect this important insight. It recognizes the need to act forcefully on the social determinants of women's health.

Although many of the underpinnings of women's ill-health need to be tackled within the broader social and economic arena, the role of the health sector remains crucial. The health care system is a vital determinant of women's health. This report and the *2008 World Health Report* both emphasize the renewed relevance of Primary Health Care, which has the potential to deliver better and more equitably distributed health care to women provided a) health care is organized around families and communities, with a clear recognition of the negative consequences of gender inequality within them; b) prevention and promotion are in balance with investments in curative interventions; and c) mechanisms are in place to enable intersectoral action and women's participation in planning and designing health services.

The conclusions and proposed actions presented in this excellent report correspond to the insights and recommendations of the Women and Gender Equity Knowledge Network of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health. WHO can support their implementation by providing strong leadership and focus to these actions, and assisting Member States to develop strategies, to create well-resourced and positioned institutional structures for women's health and to strengthen data bases and monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the progress made. This must be done within a defined time-frame with clear goals and indicators.