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 Empowering women is key to building a future we want, Nobel laureate says ▼

Empowering women is key to building a future we want, Nobel laureate says

Sep 27, 2012

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New York — Empowering women and girls with more choices and more freedoms is crucial to achieving a better future for all, Amartya Sen, Nobel laureate and a founder of UNDP's Human Development Index, said Thursday.

Women agency and freedom are among the crucial means for enhancing development," Sen, professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University, told a panel on "Securing the Future We Want: Gender Equality, Economic Development, and Environmental Sustainability" alongside the 67th UN General Assembly.

The way in which economic progress is judged in the contemporary world ... tends to give a much larger role to men's needs and demands despite all the progress that has been achieved in enhancing the voices of women in the last half-century," he said, calling for stepped-up efforts to make women's lives "more free, more robust, and more empowered."

Sen was a seminal contributor to the first Human Development Reports (HDRs), (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/>) UNDP's flagship publication, and Human Development Index—which were developed in collaboration with the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq.

The HDI aims to measure national progress beyond gross domestic product through indices such as gender equality, child survival rates, and educational attainment.

Countries that have expanded opportunities for women and girls in education and work in recent decades have largely achieved greater prosperity and moderated population growth while limiting child mortality and achieving social progress for all, Sen said. "These greater opportunities and freedoms...have had truly astonishing results," he said. "There is an overwhelming need to pay attention to the needs of girls and women."

Bangladesh, written off as a basket case" in recent memory, has achieved tremendous strides since the 1970s in reducing child mortality, increasing life expectancy, and reducing fertility from seven children per woman to 2.2 children per woman, Sen said. "In contrast with India, in each area Bangladesh has come from behind and surpassed it. And the moving force has been the rapid development of women's empowerment," he said, adding, "Bangladesh is the only country I know of in which the number of girls in school exceeds the number of boys."

"Women's empowerment is catalytic and central" to achieving social and environmental goals, UNDP Associate Administrator Rebeca Grynspan said. "Women are central actors making the case for the sustainable development triple-win strategy"—meaning economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability.

The panel included former Finnish president Tarja Halonen and Amina Mohammed, founder of the Center for Development Policy Solutions and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning.

Winnie Byanyima, Director of UNDP's Gender Team, moderated the discussion, which marked the launch of a new publication, *Powerful Synergies: Gender Equality, Economic Development, and Environmental Sustainability*. (<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/powerful-synergies/>)

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Jan 25, 2017

When it comes to climate change adaptation, the process of supporting real transformational change is just as intricate as maintaining your grandfather's Casio.

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