



## Egyptian First Lady unfolds 3-point plan against poverty

**Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt (PANA)** - Egyptian First Lady Suzanne Mubarak has unveiled a three-point plan, urging Africa to invest in women empowerment through education, equal job opportunities and policies to boost income generation for women.

In her keynote address at a conference here Sunday to track the achievements made in the fight for better economic opportunities for the African women, Mubarak said the gender debate should not be separated from social development.

"Any effective gender strategy must address the root causes of disparities and map out a national master plan with defined budgetary resources that target the special needs of poor women...you may ask why the poor"

"The reason is, it is they who carry the disproportionate burden of the gender inequality," she told fellow gender activists here.

She said African states must urgently narrow the gender gaps in the provision of key services like education, health and offer employment opportunities, to enable them meet the UN poverty goals, which would translate into instant successes against poverty.

According to the Egyptian First Lady, African states might not achieve the commitments made to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), unless they tackled the gender gaps which have been identified in the provision of

education and health.

"Women are deeply implicated in each of poverty, illiteracy, ill-health and the environment areas and success in narrowing the gender gap will translate immediately into rapid gains on all fronts," Mubarak told the activists.

She said institutions must be created to provide incentives for women to broaden their participation in economic, political and social levels.

Egypt, she said, had started the implementation of a national vision that rested on the three fundamental principles - mainly on the need to expand women's capabilities, freedom and dignity, while also emphasising on social protection and sustained empowerment.

She said the government of President Hosni Mubarak was committed to investments in the human capital development through the emphasis on the women's constitutional rights to enjoy the same treatments as men, regardless of their economic status.

She specifically pointed out that legislation tackling taxation and pension schemes had not been "gender-neutral" and had assumed that men were the primary income earners.

"The reality is that about 20 per cent of the households are headed by women, mostly poor and this proportion is growing. To make sure legislation does not discriminate against women, we have addressed explicit discrimination in many reforms", she added.

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