



state of world population 2008

Reaching Common Ground: Culture, Gender and Human Rights

12 November 2008

Dear Editor:

The State of World Population 2008 from UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is published a few days ahead of the International Day for Tolerance, 16 November, which calls for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any distinction of race, sex, language or religion. It also coincides with the 60th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The report calls for culturally sensitive approaches to development, to promote human rights in general, and women's rights in particular.

The State of World Population says there should be no conflict between human rights and cultural values, since human rights express values universal to all cultures. Yet, practices that infringe human rights can be found in all cultures. Embracing cultural realities can reveal the most effective ways to challenge harmful cultural practices and strengthen beneficial ones. The intention of the report is to demonstrate how this works in practice.

The report says that culturally sensitive approaches, among other things, seek the local knowledge and relationships that can provide the basis for dialogue and positive change, avoid generalizations and encourage humility among those who work with communities.

Once again, UNFPA is publishing a youth supplement to *The State of World Population 2008*. *Generation of Change: Young People and Culture* features the stories of young women and men, their experiences and achievements in different cultures.

I am confident that you will find the report and supplement valuable sources of news stories, features and editorials. *The State of World Population 2008* and *Generation of Change: Young People and Culture* are under embargo until 1200 GMT, 12 November 2008.

Sincerely,

Safiye Çağar

Director

Information and External Relations Division

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund