

THE WAY FORWARD

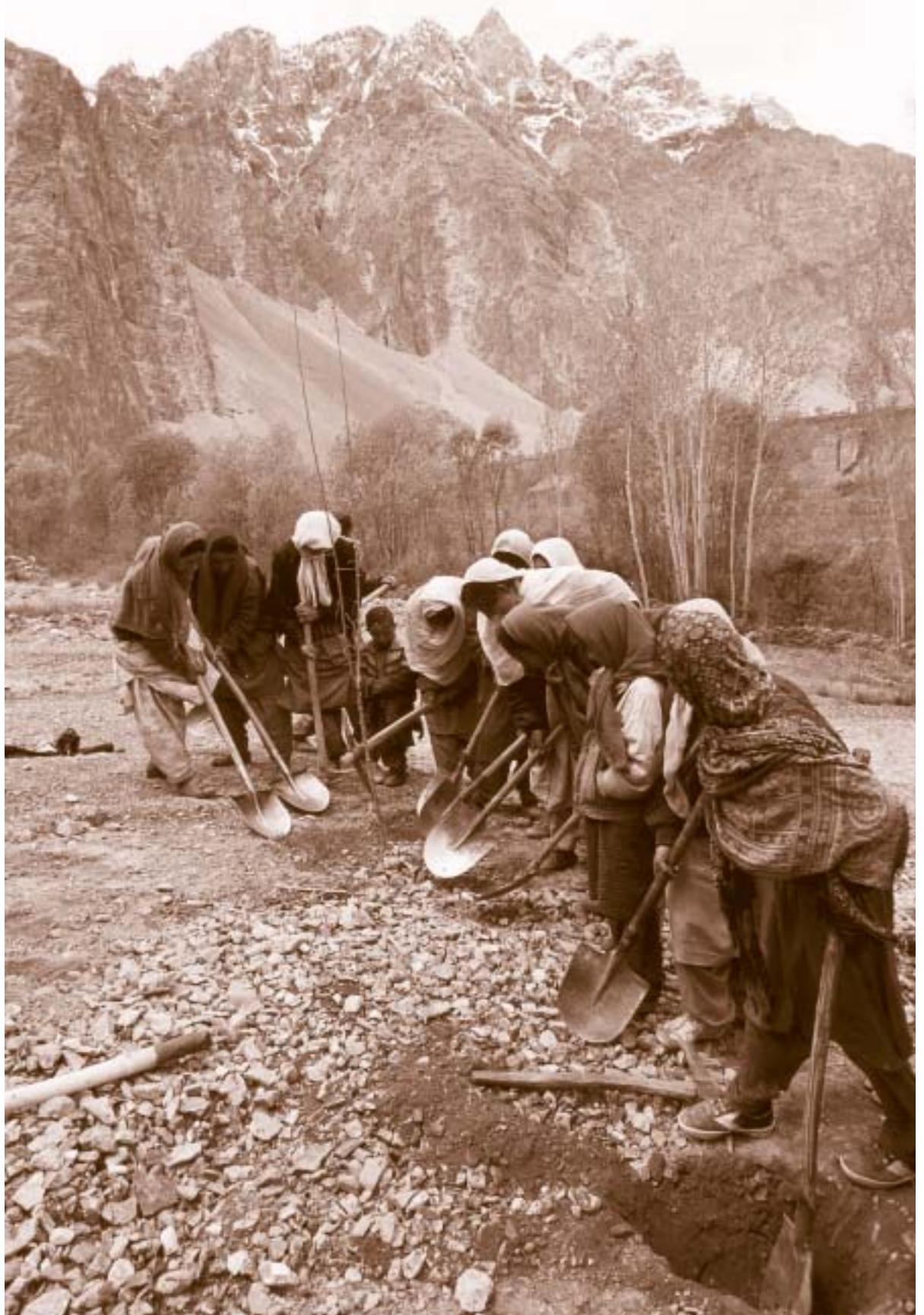
During the past decade, the world has witnessed a changing environment for gender and development. Many emerging development concerns, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its increasing feminization, the rapid aging of population in some regions and the growth of adolescent populations in others, globalization and technological advances, a growing recognition of the private sector's importance as a source of finance and economic dynamism, and decentralization of governance, all raise new opportunities and challenges for achieving gender equality. The international architecture for development has also changed. Today, the Millennium Development Goals and countries' own poverty reduction strategies are guiding the development community. The MDGs set specific targets toward which the entire development community is working while country-owned strategies to reduce poverty identify the specific path a country will follow to achieve the MDGs. Because gender equality is central to poverty reduction and the MDGs, meeting the MDGs and implementing each country's poverty reduction strategy are closely linked to meeting the Beijing goals.

The decade since the Beijing Conference has demonstrated that it is possible to improve women's and girls' lives. Although there are no "one-size-fits-all" formulas, there are many practical steps that can be taken to reduce inequalities based on gender. This section focuses on the way forward for World Bank support to countries in meeting the Beijing goals.

HELPING COUNTRIES MEET THEIR GOALS FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS

The current environment presents both opportunities and challenges for achieving the Beijing goals. Looking ahead, the World Bank's support to countries in meeting their own goals for empowering women and girls will emphasize three areas:

- Supporting gender-relevant policy analysis, dialogue, and operational work;
- Promoting greater gender equality through private sector development; and
- Working more closely with civil society and development partners.



The World Bank will also continue to play a facilitation role to mobilize action on important gender and development issues.

Supporting Gender-Relevant Policy Analysis, Dialogue, and Operational Work

One key lesson from the past decade is that country policies can have very different impacts on men and women. Recognizing these different impacts, and, where they are judged to be detrimental to human well-being and sustainable development, formulating policies that ensure that both females and males benefit from policy changes are vital for countries to reach their development goals. One of the Bank's strengths is its policy research expertise and its ability to conduct broad-scale policy dialogue with country counterparts. The Bank will continue to expand its work on the links between gender equality and poverty reduction, both at a global level (for example, through its flagship reports and research and policy papers) and at a regional and country level (for example, through country gender assessments). The overall impact of gender equality and women's empowerment on development is well established, but issues in particular areas of economic policy and in different countries need further examination. The World Bank will continue to address gender issues in overall development policy, as well as look at emerging issues, such as the gender aspects of HIV/AIDS and the development implications of gender-based violence.

Promoting Greater Gender Equality through Private Sector Development

The private sector and trade are increasingly recognized as critical sources of growth and economic dynamism. Private capital flows to developing countries are five times the magnitude of official flows, and trade liberalization has enabled some countries to achieve unprecedented growth. Women's role in private sector development has thus far been largely underappreciated and under-supported. To rectify this problem, the Bank is seeking ways to promote female entrepreneurship and income-generating opportunities for women. The Bank's Private Sector Development Group and the International Finance Corporation are developing a program to advance women's entrepreneurship, address gender discrimination in the investment climate, encourage women's participation in the formal labor force, and promote private sector investment that will enable women to reach their full potential.

Working More Closely with Civil Society and Development Partners

With the participatory and country-driven approach to development that the Bank and the development community have adopted in the past decade, working

with partners has become increasingly important. Because different development agencies have different strengths, ensuring that the entire community collaborates with partners in government and civil society is critical for strengthening efforts to promote gender equality and empower women. The World Bank is already an active participant in the global community's efforts to enhance the opportunities and quality of lives for women and girls, and seeks to further strengthen its partnerships in the pursuit of this goal.



The Beijing goals are ambitious and their attainment requires a serious and concerted global effort. But, as this report has illustrated, improving women's lives is possible. There are many concrete steps that can be taken to reduce inequalities based on gender and thereby improve the lives all of citizens—women, girls, men, and boys.

The Beijing Conference's 10th anniversary presents an opportunity to reaffirm the development community's commitment to improving women's and girls' lives. The World Bank remains committed to promoting gender equality in the world as well as in its own organization. The Bank will continue to work in partnership with members of the development community to advance the Beijing goals.



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