

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **“PLACING WOMEN’S ISSUES ON THE FRONT BURNER WILL AID CHILD DEVELOPMENT”**

- Minister Manickchand at launching of UNICEF’s State of the World Report.

**Georgetown, Guyana – UNICEF January 25, 2007** – Hon. Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Priya Manickchand said that women and issues affecting them must be placed on the front burner, if matters such as gender equality, and child development and survival are to be addressed effectively.

She was delivering the feature remarks at the launch of UNICEF’s State of the World’s Children 2007 report, which was launched at the Hotel Tower in Georgetown, Guyana on Monday January 22<sup>nd</sup> under the theme, **“Women and Children – the Double Dividend of Gender Equality”**.

In her remarks to an audience of over 80 persons, which included the Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, representatives from the Diplomatic Corps, government and non-governmental organizations, and UNICEF’s partners, the Minister stressed the importance of the link between women and children, if progress is to be made.

“It makes no sense to join the rest of the world in celebrating other days set aside for children and ending domestic violence...when we are not working actively towards the goals we set,” she said.

She lamented the fact that even though Guyana’s laws included provisions for dealing with almost every gender issue, enough effort is not being put into implementing them.

Delivering remarks on behalf of UNICEF, Representative Johannes Wedenig stressed the importance of gender equality which furthers the cause of child survival and development. He said that because women are the primary caregivers for children, their well-being is directly connected to that of their offspring.

Whilst noting that the Report provides a road map for maximizing gender equality through many key areas, recent cases of high profile violence against children that ranged from rape to murder, reminded us how urgent it is to put an end to the violence.

“We owe it to the memory of the children like the nine year old girl whose body was found bearing evidence of rape and strangulation, just last week and many others who are sexually or otherwise abused so often, to embark upon a sustained campaign against all forms of violence under which children suffer,” said Wedenig.

He reaffirmed UNICEF’s commitment towards working with all partners to ensure that Guyanese children truly benefit from the double dividend.

Women’s activist and Chairperson of the National Commission on Women, Magda Pollard remarked that it was important for there to be advocacy at the parliamentary level, regarding issues which affect women. She reiterated the Report’s view that women’s involvement at the national and local levels, leads to policies and legislation that are focused on women, children and families.

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First Lady Varshnie Jagdeo, who is the Chairperson of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, concluded the proceedings and launched the publication. She stated that a concerted effort was needed before any real progress is made, and made a plea for the end to violence both in the home and in schools. She said that teachers needed to be trained in alternative disciplinary measures.



Advocating for the double dividend at the Launch of the "State of the World's Children's 2007" from left: UNICEF Representative Mr. Johannes Wedenig, Coordinator of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child Ms. Shirley Ferguson, First Lady Varshnie Varshnie Jagdeo and Hon. Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Pryia Manickchand.

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