March 7, 2008

Letter to the Editor

There is no question that to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the oppression, marginalization and subjugation of the world’s girls and women must end (Business, Mar 7). It is true that women and girls are least likely to go to school, most likely to be poor and hungry, and die in childbirth in horrifying numbers. However, women should not be viewed solely as victims; they are also the world’s greatest hope for ending poverty. Women in the developing world are the ones who ensure that all of their families’ basic needs are met – from collecting water and wood to caring for the young, sick and elderly to farming food. In fact, women produce 80% of the food in Sub-Saharan Africa. Studies have shown that when women are supported in these activities, not only do they thrive, but their families’ well-being improves and all of society benefits. If women’s potential were truly recognized, we would be well on our way to reaching the Millennium Development Goals. A world without pervasive gender discrimination and subjugation would make tangible a world free from hunger and abject poverty.

Jill Lester
President & CEO, The Hunger Project
New York, NY