



**On the move for Equality**  
First World Women's Conference

**Objectif Egalité**

Première conférence mondiale des femmes

**En camino hacia la igualdad**

Primera Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer



## CONFERENCE GUIDE



Education International  
Internationale de l'Éducation  
Internacional de la Educación

# 2011 Bangkok





## ***On the move for Equality***

*Education International's First World Women's Conference*

### ***Conference Guide***

*Ambassador Hotel Bangkok*

***19-23 January 2011***

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# Welcome

Dear Friends,

I wish you a warm welcome to the EI World Women's Conference – **On the Move for Equality**. Thank you for your work and dedication that has brought us on this journey to Bangkok, Thailand.

This is the first EI Conference of its kind, with the aim to inform, stimulate and move forward the collective means of achieving gender equality and diversity, particularly in unions and through unions, in education and society. We are here to find common priorities, which will help education unions bring real dignity and respect to women and girls all over the world, a world where every boy and girl can have room to grow, be loved and cared for equally.

The past years have seen a rapid increase of coordination and exchange in the field of equality and diversity among education unions on the regional level. On the global level, the leadership of the Status of Women Committee has been vital to the Executive Board and the Secretariat. Now it is time to take this cooperation a step further. The first global meeting of the regional EI women's networks, as well as the many discussions in the workshops will provide the basis for fruitful exchange and future cooperation.

I am also looking forward to the contributions from our keynote speakers and panelists, who will provide an expert view on relevant issues and inspire our discussions.

It is no coincidence that this Conference is taking place in this corner of the world, where education unions pioneered the creation of regional EI women's networks. I would like to specifically thank the Asia-Pacific Regional Office, as well as our member organisations in Thailand, for their invaluable help in organising this event.

Let's join our hands, feet, hearts and minds to make another important step **On the Move for Equality!**



Fred van Leeuwen  
General Secretary

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# Introduction

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I add my welcome to the **On the Move for Equality** Conference.

Discrimination on the basis of gender and gender stereotypes in education remains a major concern in unions, education and society. Development, security, peace and justice are all undermined when discrimination and inequality – both in blatant and subtle ways – are allowed to flourish and affect people's daily lives, women and girls, boys and men, and consequently their co-existence.

Much change has occurred and many gains have been made for women in the twentieth century. At least for many women in most countries. We have the opportunity here to take stock. As President Susan Hopgood says, "The greatest change in our union is a cultural one: Gender equality at all levels is now a matter of course".

This Conference is intended to provide the space and opportunity for you to share, analyze, and contribute to a forum, the outcomes of which will inform EI's work on gender in the years to come and provide a basis for discussion at the next Congress, EI's 6th World Congress, to be held in Cape Town, South Africa, in July 2011.

The aims of this conference include: Creating a joint understanding of the state of progress towards equality for women and men in unions, education and society; advancing and empowering women and girls through education; furthering the achievement of gender equality in and through unions and education; validating the effectiveness of the networks and creating a global equality network; and developing the foundation for EI's action plan for the years to come.

Despite enabling legislation, international standards and specific commitments made, there remain laws needing repeal and practices that continue to reduce women and girls to second-class citizens. Furthermore, not a single country can claim gender pay equity, in education or other unionized work. In opportunities for promotion, work-life balance, part-time work, pensions, job security, maternity and parental leaves, harassment, violence and stigma in the workplace and elsewhere, much remains to be done.

In education women make up the majority of the work force in many, but not all, countries. Increasing levels of participation in unions is evident; women's representation in decision-making and leadership positions, however, grows slowly and unevenly. A vibrant education union hears all voices and uses the strength of all members, men and women, in the collective efforts to achieve equality, education for all, decent work for decent lives in democratic, caring and socially just societies.

Our record is growing impressively. Many education unions and their women's networks are bringing changes to unions and society and also transformative solutions to the same old problems: working to reach education for all goals; promoting decent jobs for decent wages for women in the education sector but also in care jobs; investing in children through quality public and private education; campaigning for financing quality public education and public services; promoting early childhood education; working to prevent violence against women; developing a global network of migrant teachers; developing workplace strategies tackling racism, xenophobia and homophobia, just to name some of them.

We know that education has the power to transform people's lives, that it is highly valued by all people, and that we will not reach the target of education for all in all countries by 2015, especially **quality** education for all. Promoting equality and encouraging diversity is core business for education, through questioning gender stereotypes, providing windows of opportunity, opening doors of access, and building positive, inclusive learning environments.

Education unions hold a unique position and are well placed to influence the public policy debate, and what takes place in learning institutions. But women's voices seem not as relevant as they should be. The lack of political will and potential setbacks require a better articulation and more clarity in our global and regional priorities. We need to be effectively united and to stress our alliances with other unions, globally and locally. But we also need to build key alliances with the international community and relevant civil society organizations. This is especially so as the causes and the combined effect of the economic, financial, food, energy and climate crises become clearer every day; they form a backdrop to our deliberations and have the known potential to exacerbate the challenge of achieving gender equality.

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By working together and with others we can do more than merely define and understand the barriers and challenges; we can share the successes, revitalize and make visible an action plan that will move us towards real equality for women and men, girls and boys.

There are no quick fixes – it is a chronic problem. This first Conference for women's rights and gender equality is an important step for EI. In the coming days, all participants have the challenge to contribute to the global equality agenda. Let us discuss, imagine, inspire

and strategise, and journey on together in the struggle for equality and a world free of discrimination.

In solidarity,



Jan Eastman  
Deputy General Secretary

## Guiding questions

Connecting the EI Women's Networks through their past and future strategies

- What are the priority issues of your regional women's network?
- How are gender inequalities reproduced?
- What are the most effective strategies for promoting gender equality?
- What are the common issues and possible core activities of a global women's network?

Taking stock of the Status of Women in Today's World

- What is the role and contribution of education unions in the fight for equality and against discrimination?
- What gains have we made in the world of work, and what made that possible?
- What are the main challenges for gender equality in unions, education systems and society?
- What alliances do we form and how do we connect to and build on the work of others?

Advancing and Empowering Girls and Women in and through Education

- What are the most effective means of achieving quality education for all girls and boys?
- How can education unions contribute to an education system that questions traditional gender stereotypes and encourages and supports diversity?
- What projects and campaigns for equality and diversity can unions organise effectively?

A Step Closer to Equality

- What analysis is necessary to assess the situation, and what differential needs must we address?
- What are the common issues and what strategies can we develop for local, national, regional and global use?
- How can we implement the results of this conference through the networks and in our daily union and education work?
- By what means can we continue a global discussion and coordination on promoting equality?
- How do we evaluate gains made and identify gaps to address?



# Practical Information

## Conference Venue

### The Ambassador Hotel

Address: 171 Sukhumvit, Soi 11  
Bangkok 10110  
Thailand

Tel: +66 (0) 2254-0444  
Fax: +66 (0) 2253-4123  
Website: <http://www.amtel.co.th>

## Currency

The local currency is the **Thai Baht** (TBH - ฿).

Approximate value in December 2010:

- 1 EUR (€) = 39.86 THB (฿)
- 1 THB (฿) = 0.025 EUR (€)
- 1 USD (\$) = 30.10 THB (฿)
- 1 THB (฿) = 0.033 USD (\$)

Money exchange is available at the hotel reception.

## Local Time

**GMT + 7** hours  
Time zone: ICT (Indochina Time)

## Transport between Airport and Hotel

Participants make their own transportation arrangements. It is strongly recommended to contact only authorized official services at the counters located in the airport arrival zone.

Public taxi counters can be found at exit gates 3 or 9 of the arrival zone in Survarnabhumi Airport. Taxi from the airport to the hotel takes 25-45 minutes. The

approximate fair is THB 300. In addition to toll fees, there is a THB 50 surcharge to be added to the taxi-meter for transportation from the airport to the city.

Bus service "Airport Express" counter is at Counter Level 1, near entrance 8 in Survarnabhumi Airport. Take bus route 3 to arrive at Sukhumvit Soi 10 or Nana stations. The approximate fair is THB 150. Airport Express service operates from 5:00am to midnight.

## Registration

The registration desk is located in the entrance hall of the hotel. Participants are advised to bring a copy of their registration confirmation letter. Self-funded participants are requested to contribute to the conference cost with a meal subsidy of 45 EUR/ 60 USD/ 1.800 THB, to be paid upon registration.

Registration will take place during following times:

- 19 January: 08:00 to 17:30
- 20 January: 08:00 to 17:30
- 21 January: 08:30 to 12:30

Late arrivals can register during Conference hours at the Information Desk in the lobby area outside the plenary room (Grand Ballroom).

## Badges

Upon registration, all participants will receive a name badge and the Conference bag containing the Conference documents. It is advised to wear your badge at all times during the Conference and evening programme.

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## Simultaneous Interpretation

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in all three working languages of EI (English, French and Spanish) during the plenary sessions as well as for one trilingual workshop. All other workshops will be organised in language-specific groups, clearly marked in the workshop programme.

Headsets will be provided to participants during the conference and will be available in the lobby area outside the plenary room. The headsets must be returned daily for recharging purposes.

## Information Desk and Reimbursements

The Conference Information Desk is located in the lobby area outside the plenary room and available for your questions and needs during Conference hours.

The Finance Office will deal with travel reimbursements and per diems. Assisted delegates are advised to proceed to the Finance Office after registration.

## Internet Access

Participants can access free wireless internet in the plenary room and in the lobby area outside the plenary room. Additionally, a cyber café is located near the hotel (for more information, please ask the Information Desk).

## Exhibition

Participants have been invited to bring materials from their unions' equality activities to showcase during the Conference. The exhibition hall is located in the lobby area outside the plenary room.

## Smoking

As of February 2008, there is a smoking ban in air-conditioned places, which includes this hotel.

## Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Breakfast is included in the hotel reservation.

Lunch is arranged daily in the hotel for all Conference participants. Self-funded participants are requested to contribute to the conference cost with a meal subsidy (see registration).

EI invites all Conference participants to a banquet dinner and cultural event on 21 January, 19:00. All other dinners are to be self-organised by participants.

## Emergency Contact Numbers

Please contact the Information Desk for urgent needs and requests.

These are the emergency phone numbers in Thailand:

- **Emergency call center  
(Police, Fire, Ambulance): 191**
- **Credit Card (American Express):  
+66 (0)2 273 5100**
- **Credit Card (Visa, Master Card):  
+66(0)2 256 7326-7**





***On the move for Equality***

*Education International's First World Women's Conference*

***Programme***

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## Pre Conference: Education International Regional Women's Networks

Grand Ballroom, First floor - Ambassador Hotel Bangkok

WEDNESDAY 19 JANUARY

The Pre-Conference aims to frame the *On the Move for Equality* Conference within the regional network perspectives, and to create a global network for action.

18:00

**Welcome and Introductions:** Jan Eastman, Deputy General Secretary

SWC Chairpersons, Jucara Dutra Vieira, Vice President Latin America, and Salimata Doumbia, Executive Board Member Africa

Aloysius Matthews, Chief Regional Coordinator Asia Pacific

Regional Women's Networks:

Asia Pacific: Lok Yim Pheng, Executive Board Asia Pacific, for ASEAN, SARCC, COPE

Africa: Teopista Birungi, Executive Board Africa, for AWEN

Caribbean: Judith Spencer-Jarrett, Chair of CUT Status of Women Committee for CTWC

Europe: Kounka Damianova, Chair ETUCE Equality Committee, for PEWN

Latin America: Maria Teresa Cabrera (Dominican Republic), Executive Board for EILA WN

EI member partners: Emily Noble, Executive Board Member North America/Caribbean

EI Equality Coordinators: Shashi Bala Singh, Coordinator, Asia-Pacific

Screening of video *Acting Locally- Connecting Globally* produced by NEA as part of the EI Visual Understanding Education Project (VUE) (2010)

19:00

**Social Hour to Meet and Greet**

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**THURSDAY 20 JANUARY****This Session aims to connect the EI Women's Networks through their past and future strategies:**

Celebrating successes, analysing old and new obstacles, and moving forward together with a powerful local, national, regional and global voice.

**08:45**      *Networks gather in Grand Ballroom*

**09:00**      **Regional Networks Meet by (Sub) Region**

Ups and downs of the regional journeys, past and present realities, and continued development of the networks

**12:30**      *Lunch*

**14:00**      **First Global Meeting of Regional Women's Networks**

Summary of regional analyses and identification of common issues

**15:30**      *Refreshment Break*

**16:00**      **First Global Meeting of Regional Women's Networks** continues

Building a global agenda: Priorities for coordinated and concerted action

**16:45**      **Conclusions and Closure**



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## Education International's first World Women's Conference

Grand Ballroom, First floor - Ambassador Hotel Bangkok

**THURSDAY 20 JANUARY**

### Official Opening Plenary

This session will provide the contextual frame for Education International's *On the Move for Equality* Conference: *Diversity and Gender Equality in EI – from the past to the future.*

**18:45** Conference participants take their seats in the Grand Ballroom

**19:00** **Opening address** by Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary

**Welcome** by the Honourable Mr. Chinnaworn Bunyakiat, Minister of Education, Government of Thailand

**Welcome** by Dr. Boonpun Sanbho, NTTU, on behalf of Thai Members

**Address** by Susan Hopgood, President

**EI Slide Show** *On the Move for Equality*

**20:00** **Reception**

Conference participants are cordially invited to the opening reception.

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**FRIDAY 21 JANUARY****DAY 1 Theme: Taking Stock of the Status of Women in Today's World**

Thirty years after the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) and 15 years after the *Beijing Platform for Action* (1995) it is time to take stock. How far have women advanced in the workplace, in decision making bodies, in the education sector and in society? How can education unions contribute to equality, for women and men, girls and boys?

**08:45** Participants gather in Grand Ballroom

**09:00** **Welcome** by Chairperson **Irene Duncan Adanusa**, Vice President Africa

**Conference Programme** by **Jan Eastman**, Deputy General Secretary

**Keynote address** by **Susan Hopgood**, President

**09:45** **Panel Discussion** moderated by **Sylvia Borren**, Co-chair of GCAP

**Nelien Haspels**, Senior Gender Specialist, ILO South-East Asia: *Gender equality and women's rights 15 years on from Beijing Platform for Action*

**Jucara Dutra Vieira**, Vice President Latin America: *Women, Power and Politics*

**Gemma Adaba**, former ITUC representative to the United Nations: *Financing Gender Equality for full employment and decent work for women*

**10:30-11:00** Refreshment Break

**11:00** **Panel discussion** moderated by **Sylvia Borren** continues

**Jan Eastman**, Deputy General Secretary: *El Quadrennial Report on The Status of Women in Unions, Education and Society*, and conclusions of the Pre-conference of Networks

**Joyce Powell**, NEA Executive Board: *Union action to achieve gender equality and full participation of women*

**Plenary Discussion**

**12:30-14:00** Lunch

**14:00-15:30** **Choice Workshop Session I**

Simultaneous interactive choice workshop sessions will provide opportunities for exchanges on specific issues related to the theme of day, identification of policy gaps, challenges, and strategies that make a difference

**15:30-16:00** Refreshment Break

**16:00-17:30** **Choice Workshop Session II**

Simultaneous interactive workshops continue

**19:00-22:00** **Reception and dinner**

Conference participants are cordially invited to a reception and dinner hosted by EI and followed by a cultural event



**SATURDAY 22 JANUARY**

**DAY 2 Theme: Advancing and Empowering Girls and Women in and through Education**

Education is one of the most effective means of breaking the cycle of poverty. However, gender inequalities continue to threaten the well being and dignity of girls and women within schools as well as in societies. The *Beijing Platform for Action*, the *Education for All* goals and the *Millennium Development Goals* have increased attention and aided progress – but not yet enough. The right to education can be translated into rights through education. What strategies can educators and their unions create and employ to achieve real, innovative and lasting change towards and beyond 2015?

- 08:45** Participants gather in Grand Ballroom
- 09:00** **Welcome** by Chairperson **Lok Yim Pheng**, Executive Board Asia Pacific
- 09:10** **Keynote address:** **Saniye Gülser Corat**, Director for Gender Equality, UNESCO
- 09:30** **Panel discussion** moderated by **Monique Fouilhoux**, Deputy General Secretary
- Carolyn Hannan**, former Director UN Division for the Advancement of Women:  
*Empowering women and girls through education - gains and gaps*
- Assibi Napoe**, Chair of the Board of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and Chief Regional Coordinator Africa: *Progress through GCE for girls in education - what are the challenges and are we addressing them?*
- Maki Hayashikawa**, Education Specialist UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) UNICEF:  
*Advancing the right of girls to education through UNGEI*
- 11:00-11:30** Refreshment Break
- 11:30** **Plenary Discussion** with panel continues
- 12:30-14:00** Lunch
- 14:00-15:30** **Choice Workshop Session III**
- Simultaneous interactive choice workshop sessions will provide opportunities for exchanges on specific issues related to the theme of day, identifying strategies, innovations and building alliances to achieve gender equality
- 15:30-16:00** Refreshment break
- 16:00-17:30** **Choice Workshop Session IV**
- Simultaneous interactive workshops continue

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**SUNDAY JANUARY 23****DAY 3 Theme: A Step Closer to Equality**

This plenary session aims to provide a broad foundation on which EI can set future directions and build an enabling action plan working with members, other trade unions, UN agencies and the international community to achieve full rights for girls and women in the context of gender equality.

- 08:45** *Participants gather in the Grand Ballroom*
- EI Slide Show** *On the Move for Equality*
- 09:00** **Welcome** by Chairperson **Haldis Holst**, Vice President Europe
- 09:15** **Report on conference outcomes** by **Teopista Birungi**, Executive Board Africa
- Respondents:** **Tungalag Dondogdulum**, Asia-Pacific Regional Committee, **Gloria Inés Ramírez**, Senate of the Republic of Colombia and **Loretta Johnson**, AFT Executive Vice President
- 10:00** **Plenary Discussion** of outcomes, results, alliances, key events, actions and processes
- 11:00-11:30** *Refreshment Break*
- 11:30** **Plenary Discussion** continues
- 12:30** **Closing Remarks** by **Susan Hopgood**, President: *A Step Closer to Equality*
- 13:00** *Lunch and Departure*





***On the move for Equality***

*Education International's First World Women's Conference*

***Background Document:  
Equality... and so the struggle continues...***

Prepared by Sheena Hanley, in conjunction with EI secretariat

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## Equality... and so the struggle continues...

The full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women is essential for the empowerment of women. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

*The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue. They are the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society. Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all peoples.*

*Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing 1995*

Although the Beijing Platform for action is now 15 years old, it is quite clear that the challenges it presented to all states, organisations and institutions in 1995 remain and that all must step up and fulfil their role if this agenda is to move forward.

This conference provides an opportunity for EI and its members to review the progress made in the on-going effort to achieve equality for women in education and in society. It provides an opportunity to look internally and externally to see what changes need to be made. It gives the chance to celebrate what has been achieved while, at the same time, recognising that the struggle for equality remains a work in progress.

As with all other major social movements the way forward has not been, and is not, a straight, well-paved and well maintained road linking problem and solution. It is a rough and at times dangerous path, with many twists and turns. We know that much remains to be done but we must not lose sight of the progress we have made in regions, nationally and internationally. Our celebration of what we have achieved will help highlight what remains to be done. It will help identify the roadblocks that must be moved and it will give clarity to discrimination and violation of rights appearing under new guises.

Our examination cannot only look at what remains to be done by governments and ministries of education. In this review we must also have the courage to look at ourselves, at our organisations, our unions: What have

we achieved and what barriers to true and effective equality still exist.

Barriers to equality are rooted in long-standing attitudes and traditions not only about women, but also about race, age, sexual orientation, disability and colour. In particular, the life situations of women outside the dominant culture — women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, women from visible minorities, elderly women, lesbians, single mothers, women living in poverty — are quite different from those of women in the mainstream of any society. For our sisters in a designated group the path to equality has been, and continues to be, even more difficult.

Equality for all women will come about only as attitudes, imbedded in the workplace, in institutions - including educational institutions and trade unions - as well as in the family, are challenged and changed. To achieve true equality, actions must be taken that make allowances for the differences in experiences and situations between women and men, and among women, if we are to correct the systemic nature of inequality.

Decision-makers require a clear understanding of the nature and severity of social problems to develop effective responses. This applies to issues of concern to women just as it does to all other matters. It is important that we are precise when we define the problem and that the proposed solutions clearly identify what needs to be done. We can only do this if we examine the impact

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of all policies and programmes from both a gender and an equity perspective. Both lenses are needed to fully understand the issues.

The work of the women's movement to have statistics disaggregated by gender was an important step forward in helping with analysis. Statistics help us clarify situations that are complex and at times murky. Unfortunately, data collection is a step that is still too often ignored with the result that strategies and programs are developed that often do not remedy the situation because they focus on trying to change the wrong target. At the other extreme they are so general they miss all targets. The problem is exacerbated even further when we insist on looking at women as a monolithic group. Programs intended to correct a problem facing all women often fail because the impact of the problem is not the same for a woman with a disability as it is for an Aboriginal woman for example. When only one lens is used we only look at part of the problem. To be truly effective the problem must be examined from the perspective of different groups of women and the solutions need to be tailored to meet the needs of these different groups. This requires governments, institutions and unions to accept that pro-active policies and programs are required to meet the differing needs of women.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains one of the most comprehensive documents outlining the areas that need to be worked on to truly achieve equality. It is an agenda for women's empowerment that reaffirms the fundamental principle that the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. As an agenda for action, the platform promotes the full enjoyment of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all women throughout their life cycle. It is as relevant today as it was fifteen years ago.

The Platform for Action identified the following as areas of critical concern that must be addressed if progress is to be made in our struggle for equality.

- Inequalities and inadequacies in, and unequal access to, education and training;
- Inequalities and inadequacies in, and unequal access to, health care and related services;
- Violence against women;
- The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation;
- Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources;

- Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;
- Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;
- Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women;
- Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media;
- Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment;
- Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

These areas still provide the framework for analysis of the issues that must be addressed. They are not, however, independent one from the other but are interlinked. Unfortunately, while progress has been made in some areas, new forms of discrimination are being recognized that continue to deny equality and that foster discrimination.

For the purpose of this paper the issues will be addressed as interlinked themes. It is up to you in your discussion groups, to put the meat on the bones and to provide EI with your knowledge and expertise of the issues in your country and your region and to provide EI with proposals for follow-up to be done locally, nationally, regionally and internationally.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

In 1990, the UN Conference on Education held in Jomtien, Thailand, promised to have all children, boys and girls, in primary school by the year 2000. Sadly, this was not a high enough priority for those with the power to bring about this goal, despite the fact that it has been a right for all children since the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In 2000, the international community once again met and pledged to attain universal primary education by 2015 and, as part of this pledge, promised to eliminate gender disparities in education by 2005. The 2010 editions of the Global Education Digest and the Global Monitoring Report on Education for All indicate that only in 85 countries will boys and girls have equal access to primary and secondary education by 2015 if present trends continue. Seventy-two countries are not likely to reach the goal – among which 63 are far from parity at the secondary level. Gender parity has been achieved in some coun-



tries and where it has we now find that more girls than boys are completing secondary and initial post-secondary education. Bad policies, neglect of the marginalised by political leaders and structural disadvantages are all cited as the causes of this failure. On a positive note, the reports also identify areas where some countries have made progress.

Given the 2010 statistics it is obvious that the goal of achieving gender parity in education needs to be given a major boost in some parts of the world. 2005 has come and gone. There was no great movement that appeared to protest the failure to achieve gender parity in 2005. The deadline passed with scarcely a murmur.

We are now at risk of losing some of the advances made in the developing world, small though they may have been, as the recession takes its toll. Access to education and gender parity in education and training risk being undermined by reductions in international aid and because national investments remain at levels that merely cover some costs. For those fortunate enough to have parents with incomes that can supplement state allocations, educational opportunities are more readily available at all levels of education leaving the poor and the marginalised looking on without access.

The most recent financial crisis has seen governments throughout the world use funds to bail out financial institutions and businesses to prevent the world from facing a depression. In some of the industrialised countries stimulus funds have been used to maintain teaching positions as well as jobs for police and firefighters. The bailouts have resulted in deficits and, in order to eliminate these deficits that now exist, we see cuts to public services including education on the horizon. In the developing world, when this is combined with struggles to cope with inter-locking crises as is currently the case, we know the vulnerable pay the highest price. Girls and women in the developing world make up the largest segment of the poor and the vulnerable. Delaying or denying the opportunity for girls and women to get an education will only reinforce the existing vicious cycle of poverty for millions.

Gender roles have many different forms depending on where one lives, whether one is rich or poor, educated or uneducated. Socio-economic status, ethnicity and geographic location are all determinants of a woman's chances in life and chances in education. Women part of an ethnic group that suffers discrimination and who are poor face more discrimination than men from a similar background. They also face stronger discrimination than women from the same location who are also poor but from the majority ethnic group. This applies in education just as in other aspects of society.

The Global Education Digest cautions that reality may actually be worse than the picture provided in national data. By using household survey data analysis, the report presents evidence that school records overstate the number of primary school age children in school by as much as 30%.

The following data is from the Global Education Digest and the Global Monitoring Report both issued in 2010.

- **72 million children of primary school age were out of school in 2007.** There is a persistent financing gap that prevents countries from reaching the goal of education for all and, based on current trends, 56 million children of primary school age will still be out of school in 2015.
- **Lack of financing is a major roadblock.** The Global Monitoring Report for 2010 estimates that donors will have to bridge a financing gap of USD 16 billion a year to meet the goal of universal primary education by 2015.
- **Girls are more likely to never enter primary school than boys.** Gender disparities remain deeply engrained, with 28 countries across the developing world having 9 or fewer girls in primary school for every 10 boys. Girls still account for 54% of the children out of school— and girls not in primary school are far less likely than boys to ever attend school.
- **In South and West Asia** around 87 girls begin primary school for every 100 boys who start school. Progress has been made in this region and Indian policies aimed specifically at getting more girls into school are cited as being responsible for the gain. The number of children not in school fell by almost 15 million in just two years from 2001 to 2003.
- **A similar situation is reported in sub-Saharan Africa** where about 93 girls begin their primary education for every 100 boys, according to the regional average. Sub-Saharan Africa has increased enrolment at five times the rate achieved in the 1990s, with countries such as Benin and Mozambique registering rapid advances. Senegal has moved from 85 girls for every 100 boys to an equal number of girls and boys. Despite these advances, stark differences in educational opportunity within countries remain.
- **Boys also have greater access than girls to secondary education** in 38% of countries while the opposite is true in 29% of countries.
- **When girls have access to education**, at both primary and secondary levels, they complete their studies more often than do boys. In Canada 10.3% of boys drop out of secondary school compared with 6.6% of girls.

- **Being born into a poor household significantly raises the risk of education deprivation.** A four-year education gap exists between the richest and poorest households in the Philippines. In India it is seven years.
- **A program in Cambodia** supplies grants to the families of girls who reach the final grade of primary school on condition that they attend secondary school. It is estimated to have increased enrolment among participants by 30%.
- **Gender interacts with wealth and location.** In Nigeria, the average youth aged 17-22 has received seven years of education. For poor rural Hausa females in Nigeria, that figure drops to less than 6 months.
- **Disparities within countries are often bigger than disparities between countries.** In Mexico, one quarter of the young adults in the southern state of Chiapas have fewer than four years of education — a figure that falls to 3% for the Federal District.
- **Redistributing public spending more fairly** is crucial. This has been a central pillar of wider strategies aimed at breaking the links between poverty, inequality and marginalization in education in Brazil.
- **Some groups face acute disadvantage.** In Kenya, 51% of male Somali pastoralists aged 17-22 have less than 2 years in school. This rises to 92% for females of the same group.
- **Governments need to ensure that marginalized children** have access to highly skilled teachers, by offering incentives for deployment to remote rural areas and disadvantaged urban areas, and by recruiting teachers from ethnic minorities.
- **Language and ethnicity often reinforce marginalization.** Turkey has made rapid progress in education, but Kurdish-speaking females from poor households average only around three years in school.
- **The Bolivian program that provides inter-cultural bilingual teaching** has expanded rapidly since the mid-1990s. It helps to overcome language-related disadvantages, while at the same time challenging discriminatory social attitudes.
- **Gender disparities are equally marked in tertiary education** in all regions of the world. The only countries to achieve parity at this education level are Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Hong Kong (SAR China), Mexico, Swaziland and Switzerland.
- **In countries, such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea and Niger,** where the GDP per capita is very low there are fewer than 35 female tertiary students for every 100 male students.
- **In wealthy countries,** female students clearly outnumber men as tertiary students. Despite the improved access to tertiary education globally, women still face barriers when they try to move up the educational ladder to research careers or to top positions in the labour market. Worldwide the wage gap and a glass ceiling persist. A young woman with a university degree earns about 90 cents to every dollar earned by a man with the same level of education. The overall average wage is 29 cents less for women on every dollar than for men. An American study found that childless urban women under age 30 earn on average 8% more than male peers. In New York City it is reported to be 17% more. Decisions made in the next decade by these young women concerning child-bearing, taking leave to stay home with a child or whether to work full or part-time will have a significant impact on lifetime earnings and pension benefits for these women.
- **At the Bachelor's degree level,** most countries reporting data have achieved gender parity in terms of graduates.
- **Women are more likely to pursue the next level of education,** accounting for 56% of graduates with Master's degrees.
- **Men surpass women in virtually all countries at the highest levels of education,** accounting for 56% of all Ph.D. graduates and 71% of researchers.
- **There has been little progress towards the goal of halving adult illiteracy** – a condition that affects 759 million people, two-thirds of whom are women.
- **Conflict-affected countries, account for one-third of children not in school,** but receive less than one-fifth of aid to education. In such situations girls are particularly vulnerable.

As shown above, some progress has been made by some countries to move the Education for All agenda forward but even in countries that have made progress inequalities linked to poverty, gender, ethnicity and language can still be seen. Education for All will not be achieved until such shortcomings are addressed and governments recognize that the lack of progress being made in education results in a terrible waste of human potential. This loss of potential undermines development, progress and prosperity and hinders economic growth.

We are all well aware of the benefits to society for every year of education given to a girl. If we are serious in our desire to reduce poverty, improve health and to help nations develop by using the full potential of all who live within their borders, then we must make progress in ad-

addressing gender parity in education. Too many countries still enact generic education policies intended to apply equally to all children in the country. We must identify which children are not in school if we are to develop strategies that will get all children into school. This means adopting pro-active policies for different groups within society. Once we know which children are not in school we must be prepared to address sensitive and difficult political questions if we are to ascertain why certain groups are not in school. We may find that some ethnic groups are more marginalized than others in our country but that the status quo is defended and the marginalized are blamed for their situation. We must be prepared to deal with issues of language, ethnicity, disability, racism, sexism, homophobia and poverty. All will surface during such examination. We must be prepared to face our own biases when developing effective policies.

Requiring governments to deal effectively with extreme inequalities should begin by insisting that all children will only get into school when the marginalized child is at the centre of education policy.

The global reports also cite a collective failure by the donor community to act on the pledge made in the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 that *no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources*. The Fast Track Initiative that was established in 2000 to make sure that financing and policy initiatives were kept by both donors and recipients *is not working and this global education aid coordination body needs fundamental reform*. Rich countries are said to be exaggerating how much aid they have provided to help poorer countries cope with the financial crisis with the result that a financing gap of USD 16 billion a year must be bridged to reach the Education for All goals.

Aid commitments to basic education are said to have stagnated from 2004 and fallen by more than one-fifth in 2007. Spain has increased its aid to basic education by 78% since 1999 but three major donors – France, Germany and Japan – are reported as continuing to *reflect a relative neglect of basic education, they commit over half of their education aid to post-primary levels*. It is essential that all levels of education are properly funded but it is critical that all children have access to primary and secondary education if they are going to have any opportunity to avail themselves of tertiary education. Under-funding will continue to destroy opportunities for millions of women and girls. It was never acceptable that girls were unable to get an education. In 2011 it shames us all.

The Global Monitoring Report estimates that *low-income countries could increase their domestic resources and al-*

*locate more to education*. However, even if these governments maximize their efforts to increase domestic spending on education, the financing gap is still estimated to be USD 16 billion annually for 46 low-income countries. Earlier estimates did not fully account for the full cost of achieving core education goals. In part this happened because they did not count the additional costs needed for pro-active programs to reach deprived groups.

Until these issues are addressed, Education for All and gender parity within education will remain a pipe-dream. Without education women's participation in the economy suffers, women remain in poverty, they are subjected to more violence and they are excluded from decision-making. The inter-linkages are clear.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

*Violence against Women is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm, or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.*

### UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993

Violence is a major factor affecting women's health and well-being. In addition to being a nightmare existence for millions of women who live with, or in constant fear of violence, the measurable health-related costs amount to billions of dollars a year. In the industrialized world these costs include short-term medical and dental treatment for injuries, long-term physical and psychological care, lost time at work, and the use of transition homes and crisis centres. In conflict situations and in some parts of the world, women do not have access to such services and the nightmare becomes their daily reality.

Women will not be free from violence until they achieve equality with men. Equality cannot be achieved until violence and the threat of violence are eliminated from women's lives. It is urgent that the vicious circle is broken and the parameters for the solutions to end violence against women are set. Societies must move from denial to acknowledgement, from inequality to the sharing of power. Solutions must be based on a policy of zero tolerance at all levels of government and within every organization and in every home.

Violence against women cuts across all racial, social, cultural, economic, political and religious spectrums. All



women are at risk. All violence against women is unacceptable and we must make this statement as loudly and clearly as we can. Women with a voice must speak out. But they must speak on behalf of the women in situations of war or conflict who are voiceless. They must help speak for the powerless who have no recourse against the systemic violence perpetrated as a weapon of war. Increasingly we read of rape and torture of women used as weapons to humiliate and subdue opponents. The current conflicts in the Congo and in Darfur are such examples. Recognition that such atrocities are criminal acts was stepped up following the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s. The abuse in that war became a catalyst for the inclusion of sexual abuses of all kinds to be recognized internationally as war crimes.

The consequences of violence against women are not identical from one woman to another. Factors such as the duration, nature and gravity of the abuse, the personality of the victim, the support network and resources available all make the impact different from victim to victim. Some forms of criminal violence are now being given more exposure in a number of countries. This increase in attention is largely because:

- High-profile cases have involved famous women (stalking);
- Immigrant families are involved and the killings are portrayed as crimes that have now crossed borders with those families (honour killings) and that the families come from societies that turn a blind eye to such treatment;
- Trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation or cheap labour is now being exposed as a multi-billion criminal racket preying on women who try to get out of poverty.

**Stalking** is defined as persistent, malicious, unwanted surveillance; an invasion of privacy that is a constant threat to an individual's personal security. The stalker may begin by telephoning and harassing a woman or her friends and family. The stalker persistently follows the woman and spends extended periods of time watching her home or place of work and watching her movements. The surveillance can move to violent encounters. In some countries laws have been enacted creating the new offence of criminal harassment to deal with stalking.

**Honour killings** are not new in any part of the world. These misnamed murders take place all over the world, whenever a man, aided and abetted by others or not, kills a woman because he feels she has tarnished his honour. Honour killings are defined as murders perpetrated by families on family members who are believed to have brought shame on the family name. It is a male

member of the family who kills a female relative for tarnishing the family image. Almost always such a crime is accompanied by allegations of a sexual nature—of adultery, infidelity, or involvement in prostitution. We must be clear that there is no such thing as an honour killing. There is no honour in the murder of a woman.

Although the term honour killing has been used more recently to refer to crimes committed by families from India, Pakistan or some countries in the Middle East, they are not restricted to any region or religious group. Brazil, a country that was once considered the capital of honour-killing (albeit under the title "crime of passion") has recently eliminated the defence that a man is justified in killing an intimate partner because he believes his honour had been besmirched. While much still needs to be done in both principle and practice, to end this tolerance of violence that costs women so dearly, the Brazilian example is a step in the right direction.

**Trafficking of women** to be used in prostitution or in forced labour is increasingly prevalent and affects every region of the world. Countries are a source, a transit point or a destination country for women who are trafficked. Women and children from developing countries, and from the most vulnerable parts of society in developed countries, are lured into leaving their homes and travelling to foreign destinations with promises of employment. The women are usually young and poor. They are provided with false travel documents usually indicating they have work permits. An organized network is then used to transport them to the country where they will be held and find themselves forced into sexual slavery, existing in inhumane conditions and in constant fear of violence against them or their family.

INTERPOL reports that the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation is an international, organized, criminal phenomenon that has grave consequences for the safety, welfare and human rights of its victims.

Trafficking in women is a criminal act that violates the most basic of human rights. It totally destroys victims' lives. All women's advocacy groups have a responsibility to help end such barbarity. Legislation, shelter, safe havens and understanding are needed.

**Spreading images of violence against women via technology** is another twist in the ongoing saga. The ease of access to pornographic material that demeans women and promotes sexual violence against women is a cause for concern.

Technology is also now being used to spread pictures of beatings, rape and molestation of women and young girls. A recent suicide in the United States of a young



gay man was caused by someone who released a video on the internet of the man in a homosexual relationship. It is essential that such behaviour is criminalised if we are to end such violence. Education is increasingly necessary for young people who may not be aware of the dangers of viewing dehumanising behaviours that treat women and girls as disposable commodities. While some work is being done to end cyber bullying it does not necessarily deal with the sexual component of violence against women and girls or deal with homophobia. Education must expose the dangers of such abuse being linked to technology, but must also address the underlying causes of the violence. It also must make it clear that the onlookers, those who watch such violence, are also guilty of perpetrating the hatred that leads to it in the first place.

Violence against women takes many forms but it is most commonly divided into the following dimensions:

- **Psychological violence** encompasses various tactics to undermine a woman's self-confidence such as yelling, insults, mockery, threats, abusive language, humiliation, harassment, contempt, threats, isolation or deliberate deprivation of emotional care.
- **Physical violence** ranges from pushing and shoving to hitting, beating, physical abuse with a weapon, torture, mutilation and murder.
- **Sexual violence** is any form of non-consensual sexual activity ranging from harassment, unwanted sexual touching to rape. This form of violence also includes incest.
- **Financial violence** is the use of various tactics for total or partial control of a couple's finances, inheritance or employment income. This may also include preventing a partner from taking employment outside the home or engaging in other activity that would lead to financial dependence.
- **Spiritual abuse** destroys an individual's cultural or religious beliefs through ridicule or punishment, forbidding practice of a personal religion or forcing women or children to adhere to religious practices that are not their own.

All women by virtue of their gender are vulnerable to violence but, as is the case with all matters that have an effect on women's lives, some women are more vulnerable than others. The degree of risk is dictated by factors that include their class, culture, race, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, education, age and where they live. Aboriginal women, older women, poor women, women of colour, immigrant women, lesbian and transgendered women and women with disabilities are

among the groups that face higher levels of violence. It is important to recognize the needs of women who are isolated or marginalized from the mainstream because of one or more of these factors. If ever a blueprint for changing society was needed it is on this issue.

As members of a profession that is predominantly female we must keep in mind that statistics on violence against women do not suggest women teachers are somehow exempt from such violence. They are not.

Many myths and misinformation surround violence against women and these must be dispelled. Some believe that violence is perpetrated by strangers. Facts show it is often those whom women trust, those whom they are taught to respect, those whom they love who abuse them. Who has not heard or read of women who were beaten saying *He loves me, he did not mean to hurt me. I deserved it because I made him angry.* Women make excuses for those they love. One pervasive myth places responsibility for the violence used against a woman with the woman herself. Education is needed to show violence for what it is. It is an exercise of power to maintain power.

While most institutions now recognise that such violence exists, unfortunately, there are still some that contribute to this situation by denying or rationalising the data and information available. Such behaviour perpetuates misogyny and continues the abuse of power. Violence against women is preventable and all governments, departments, institutions, unions, organisations and families have a role to play in making violence against women completely unacceptable.

Teacher unions have an important role to play in dispelling the myths and making sure that programs and services are available to assist any teacher who faces violence. We also have a role to play in teaching young women that violence against them is unacceptable. We can help them know their rights and where to get help if it is needed. We must teach both young men and women that the phenomenon of violence against women is the result of a combination of factors. One factor to be noted is that male violence is the result of behaviours learned at a young age, often as a way to express masculinity. Using power as a way to dominate and control others is a way of trying to make violence more acceptable. Most acts of violence are an attempt to assert control over others. Paradoxically, most violent acts by men against women are a fundamental sign of weakness, insecurity and lack of self-esteem. When combined with a capacity for physical and verbal domination, and the belief that a real man maintains control, violence is an attempt to affirm power, privilege and control. A feminist analysis of such a situation would be

that a spouse who manifests verbal abuse, psychological, physical, social or financial violence against his partner is not losing control. Rather, it is an affirmation of conserving his power at any cost. In fact, when a man chooses to beat his partner it is because he believes he has the right and the means to do so.

The social structure which sustains gender inequalities is bolstered by the general acceptance in society of the subordination of women to men (e.g. women are paid less). Along with this we see the roles assigned to women and men, sometimes by their religion or their culture and certainly in the media, that perpetuate subordination as acceptable behaviour. The lack of severe penalties for violent acts compared with the gravity of such acts also encourages violence against women.

When teachers teach young men and women of the underlying causes of violence against women they must be clear that while there are many explanations for violence, there are no excuses.

Globally, up to 6 out of every 10 women experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. A 2003 report from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the cost of intimate partner violence in the United States alone exceeds USD 5.8 billion per year. USD 4.1 billion is for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly USD 1.8 billion due to absenteeism. A World Health Organization study of 24,000 women in 10 countries found that the prevalence of physical or sexual violence by a partner varied from 15% in urban Japan to 71% in rural Ethiopia, with most areas being in the 30–60% range.

A 1994 World Bank study selected ten risk factors facing girls and women, in the 16 to 44 year old age group. The study found violence to be a major cause of death and disability. Rape and domestic violence were found to be more dangerous than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and malaria. Studies also reveal an increasing link between violence against women and HIV and AIDS. A survey among 1,366 South African women showed that women who were beaten by their partners were 48% more likely to be infected with HIV than those who were not.

Violence against women carries heavy consequences for both victims and society. Because violence is a learned behaviour, children exposed to abusive relationships are at risk of being abusers and so the cycle continues.

International and regional legal instruments clearly outline the obligations of States to prevent, eradicate and punish violence against women and girls. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

against Women (CEDAW) requires that countries that are signatories of the Convention take all appropriate steps to end violence. The UN Secretary-General's 2006 In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women tells us that 89 countries have some legislation on domestic violence and a growing number of countries have national plans of action. Some progress has been made in addressing marital rape and it is a prosecutable offence in 104 States. Ninety (90) countries have laws on sexual harassment. In 102 countries there are no specific legal provisions against domestic violence, and marital rape is not a prosecutable offence in at least 53 nations. The prevalence of violence against women and girls clearly shows that this global pandemic has not yet been tackled with the necessary political will and resources needed to end it.

A number of UN reports are increasingly dealing with the issue of violence against men in civil wars and internal conflicts. In civil wars, violence is being used as a strategic choice or weapon of war to intimidate civilians for political and economic gains. The 2010 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the World Population report that looks at gender violence in conflicts shows that the violence perpetrated by men against other men and boys involves sexual violence. Examples are cited of abuse of people from the Great Lakes region, particularly the Democratic Republic of Congo. In an account of an ordeal given by a male refugee who, along with other men, was sexually abused by numerous soldiers, he reported that they told *You are worth nothing. He went on to say They were putting us in the place of women. They said, We are going to show you that you are all women. You are not men like us.* Men were also forced to witness or participate in acts such as the rape of their wives, mothers or daughters by armed assailants. One woman quoted in the report told of how her brother was killed because he refused at gunpoint to rape her.

This report also condemns the abusive treatment of women in the course of military conflicts and points out that there are few women peace-keepers.

Obviously no-one would ever think of condoning such atrocities against any human being. They are inhuman acts of violence. It shows clearly, however, that for perpetrators of such violence anything can be justified if the victims are thought of as worthless women.

There are concerns being raised among some women's advocacy organizations that the long, hard battles for recognition, justice and compensation for women victims of violence may wane as more attention turns to male victims of violence. The UN Security Council has demanded the immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence



against civilians with immediate effect and called for sex crimes to be exempt from any amnesty provisions within peace agreements.

In 2010, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, set down a five-point agenda to reduce or eradicate gender-based violence. She calls for:

- An end to impunity for sexual crimes;
- The protection and empowerment of women and girls to enable them to contribute to peace initiatives;
- The strengthening of political commitments to ensure violence against women is not pigeon-holed as just a women's issue;
- The realization that rape is a frontline issue;
- Peace negotiations that must address sexual violence early and fully to prevent war-time rape from becoming peacetime reality.

In many of today's conflicts, women are disempowered by rape or the threat of it, and by the HIV infection, trauma and disabilities that often result. Girls are disempowered when they cannot go to school because of the threat of violence, when they are abducted or trafficked, or when their families disintegrate or must flee.

Women must keep these issues at the top of our agenda and the agenda of our unions. We need to, once again, call for zero tolerance of violence against women. Within EI you have a rare opportunity to work together to implement real change, to help create a society where there will be safety and equality for women. Most of all EI members must make sure that unions are not just paying lip service to such issues for the sake of political correctness. If EI stands for human rights, violence against women must be front and centre of any work we do. A first step is to ensure that no-one turns a blind eye to violence against girls in school. There is no place in the profession for anyone who has sex with a student who has been entrusted to their care.

## WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

*For the majority of women, continuing obstacles have hindered their ability to achieve economic autonomy and to ensure sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their dependants. Women are active in a variety of economic areas, which they often combine, ranging from wage labour and subsistence farming and fishing, to the informal sector. However, legal and customary barriers to ownership of or means of access to land, natural resources, capital, credit, technology and other means of production, as well as wage differentials, contribute to impeding the economic progress of women.*

### Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

Although women have made progress in many parts of the world in closing the gender gap in managerial and professional jobs since the Beijing Platform of Action was adopted, there remain some areas that are difficult to penetrate and where no substantial progress has been made.

The root causes of having fewer women at the top, whether we are speaking of governments, the judiciary, organisations or trade unions, are the same today as in decades past. People tend to see power in their own light -- their own race, gender or education. This accounts for the lack of diversity at the top levels of business, government and organisations. Valuing different voices is essential if we really want senior positions to be inclusive.

Non-family friendly environments are also difficult for women who do not want to have to choose between a career and a family. As long as women are few and far between at the top, and as long as diversity is lacking at senior levels then promoting women, particularly those with families, will be seen as a risk. All of the above create a catch 22 situation and as long they continue, those with the power to make choices will remain uncomfortable with women in the most senior positions.

Women's economic dependence has many causes. It can result from a lack of the right to own property or to access credit closing the door to achieve financial independence and equality. It is also the direct result of undervaluing the work done by women.

Recent economic and political developments have seriously affected women and girls in many countries and, in the worst case scenarios, the interlocking crises are causing a regression of the gains made by women.

Bangkok, 19-23 January 2011



The most recent recession, and the subsequent bailouts, resulted in government deficits that now have to be repaid. When governments choose to off-set deficits by lowering investments in social programs their actions have a disproportionate impact on women. The fallout from the economic crisis is resulting in an increase in the work demanded of many women while, at the same time, services meant to assist them with their multiple roles, are being decreased. In worst case scenarios, lack of services and unemployment is leading to extreme poverty that is resulting in the trafficking and prostitution of young women with the attendant hazards for their safety, health and well-being.

**With the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action all States were expected to:**

- Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources;
- Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade; Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women;
- Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks;
- Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.

**So how well have they done?**

- Women now represent a growing economic force both as employees and as business owners.
- They are increasingly prominent in management and in their professions.
- Women still do most of the invisible work in the home that, while unpaid, is vital to the economy and the quality of life.
- Women predominate in non-profit and voluntary organizations that are foundation of our communities.
- Women are over-represented in non-standard (part-time, occasional and seasonal) and minimum wage employment.
- Despite their increasing role in the paid workforce, women's wages and share of national wealth remain well behind that of men.
- Women make up a disproportionate share of the world's poor.
- Women remain under-represented in government and in the judiciary.

Worldwide women own only 1% of the world's wealth, have only a 10% share in global income, and occupy just 14% of leadership positions in the private and public sector. And, while women produce half of the world's food, they own a mere 1% of its land.

All of this shows that with a quarter-century of effort some progress has been made but many challenges remain. One of the most stubborn roadblocks, where little progress has been made, is in closing the wage gap that exists between men and women for work of equal or equivalent value. While the gap has lessened somewhat in some parts of the world, no real progress on lessening the wage gap ratio has been made since 2001. The current, shaky economic recovery continues to disadvantage women by failing to provide strong job growth at all wage levels. An Australian study shows that women now earn nearly 18% less than their male counterparts. The wage gap has widened in the past three decades in Australia. In 1977 women were earning, on average, 88% of the salaries of their male counterparts compared to 82% in 2010.

Those with long memories (going back over 30 years) may recall economists forecasting that the gender pay gap would be closed in 30 years. Thirty years have come and gone and the gap remains. Some would have us believe that the gap does not reflect discrimination, but blame it on factors, such as;

- The extremely high wages of a few white men that skews the data;
- Gendered patterns of occupational and educational choice;
- The work patterns and work experience of women.

If women accept such assertions then all they ought to do is make the right educational and occupational choices and they will not experience a wage gap. This is a false assumption. The pay gap does not only exist between white women and white men. That is where the pay gap is widest. In the USA, white women earned 73.4% of the salaries of white men in 2001; in the same year, black women earned 84.8% of the salary earned by black men. The wage gap exists across racial, ethnic and educational levels.

There are also those who believe that if only women would choose to work in male-dominated occupations in larger numbers, the wage gap would cease to exist. However, a gender-related wage gap exists in virtually every occupational category. The Center for Gender Studies found only four occupational categories, for which comparison data were available, where women earned even a little more than men. These jobs are as



special education teachers, order clerks, electrical and electronic engineers and in miscellaneous food preparation occupations. Social psychologists have demonstrated that occupations associated with women, or those that require skills that are stereotypically considered feminine skills, are considered less prestigious and less deserving of the pay levels provided in occupations associated with men and masculine skills. When women enter what has been a predominantly male occupation in large numbers, there is a tendency to devalue the occupation and lessen remuneration.

In education we can see how work is valued when it is done mainly by women. The vast majority of pre-school teachers are women and their pay levels are traditionally less than in other levels of education. This has been and remains an area where few men choose to work. As you move through the levels of education men are found at higher levels and in administration. Salaries are higher at these levels. In higher education women do not make it to the highest paying positions of academia in anything like the numbers that reflect their academic achievements.

Millions of women are still struggling to juggle work outside the home along with family responsibilities. This includes care-giving for children and also for elderly parents or relatives. Increasingly, we are told, the future of economies worldwide depends on women's work, both inside and outside the home. If women and men continue to accept the notion that domestic and caretaking work is not important enough for employers to accommodate, the gender gap in wages will never close and women will continue to pay the price on all fronts. Women who require leave from work for care-giving make sacrifices in their careers. They are repaid with lack of promotional and training opportunities resulting in lower lifetime earnings leading to lower pensions and benefits.

Women in the European Union earn, on average, 18% less than men - a gap that has scarcely narrowed over the last 15 years. In some countries it has actually grown. British women in full-time work currently earn 17% less per hour than do men. This does not necessarily indicate differences in rates of pay for comparable jobs and EU studies show that direct discrimination has declined in recent years. The lopsided earnings are attributed to a combination of traditions, stereotypes and problems balancing work and private lives.

In the USA, the pay gap between men's and women's wages has decreased slightly in 25 years but it remains remarkably high. In 1984, women earned 68% of the average full-time weekly wage for men. In 2009, the average full-time weekly wage for women was 80% of that earned by men. To change the wage gap significantly, or have it disappear, requires women to stop buying into

the idea that the rules are gender-neutral. Women and employers must re-examine assumptions that place a higher value on the type of work men do than on the type of work women do. Gender equity programs are needed in the workplace and they need to have sanctions built in to ensure that work is truly valued whether it is done by a man or a woman.

A study prepared by the Majority Staff of the Joint Economic Committee was presented to a US Senate Committee in 2010. While the information is based on the situation in the USA the trends reflect what is happening throughout the world.

- Women's labour force participation in the USA has grown from 53.6 % in 1984 to 59.2% in 2009. By contrast, men's participation rates in the labour force have been falling since the late 1990s, and continue to do so.
- In Italy and Japan, women's share of jobs is still 40% or less while 55-60% of German and French women have paid jobs.
- By contrast there are 61 million women of working age in the Middle East and North African region. Only 17 million are employed outside the home.
- Women make up less than one-quarter of the non-agricultural workforce in many countries including Egypt, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. Studies in this region predict that increasing women's participation in the labour force could grow household income by as much as 25%.
- In the USA women's share of paid employment grew from 44% in 1984, to 49.85 in 2009. In part this is caused by the decline in construction and manufacturing, where more men were employed. However these figures only tell part of the story. If you look outside the traditional male employment sectors, women can actually be at higher risk of losing their jobs during a recession because they are more likely to work part-time or have occasional contracts. These are the workers that are easiest to let go because their job contracts offer less security. The loss of jobs in male-dominated sectors has been so high it has overshadowed the impact of this extra risk factor for women.
- In the developing world more women are now in the paid workforce. In East Asian economies, for every 100 men in the labour force there are now 83 women, higher than the average in OECD countries.
- Work schedules for women have not changed significantly. 25% of working women in the USA work part-time.

- Women make up more than 50% of the workforce in five spheres of employment. They are the majority of workers in government (public service), leisure and hospitality, education and health services, and other service areas like food services. Little progress has been made in entry into the information industry in the US.
- Women have been particularly important to the success of Asia's export industries, typically accounting for 60-80% of jobs in many export sectors, such as textiles and clothing.
- Women's educational attainment is now greater than that of men in many countries. In the USA, in twenty five years women have gone from 73% having a minimum of four years of high school education to 87% today. During the same period men have gone from 74% to 86%.
- 140 women in the USA enroll in higher education each year for every 100 men; in Sweden the number is as high as 150 while in Japan there are 90 female Japanese students for every 100 males. In Jordan, women have achieved parity in education but still are not fully represented in the formal economy. In Britain more women than men train as doctors and lawyers, but relatively few are leading surgeons or partners in law firms.
- While total union membership has declined over the last two decades, women's union membership has been on the rise. In 1984, women made up just over 34% of all union members in the USA. In 2008, they comprise 45% of union members. The growing importance of women in the labour movement is due to the expansion of sectors such as health care, education, and the service sector.
- Women's earnings play an increasingly important role in families' incomes.
- Female heads of household for families with children aged 18 and under now account for 25% of all families with children. In 1983 they accounted for 20% of families in the USA.
- Amongst employed US mothers with children under the age of eighteen, 34% were the sole family breadwinner in 2009.

Child care costs place a significant burden on families, particularly the working poor and the middle class. Again in the USA, child care for an infant costs a two-parent family living at the federal poverty line nearly 50% of their annual income, while a family living at 200% of the federal poverty line spends nearly 25% of their annual income on child care. While costs are somewhat lower for an older child, the burden on working families remains heavy. Child care is an area that needs to be bolstered if

women are expected to increase their participation in the workforce. Child care and early childhood education are two areas that must become more accessible and affordable to families. Poor or expensive early child care will deter women from working in full-time positions particularly if they do not have an extended family to assist.

In industrialized economies, women produce just under 40% of official GDP. But if housework is valued, at the average wage rates paid to a home help or a nanny, and added to what women produce then their contribution rises to slightly more than half of total output. There are studies that show that over the past decade, the increased employment of women in developed economies has contributed more to global growth than have the new technologies or the development of the economies of China and India.

Making better use of women's skills is not just a matter of fairness; it makes good economic sense. This is not reflected by the 7% of directors on the world's corporate boards who are women - 15% in the USA, but less than 1% in Japan. A study by the World Economic Forum found a clear correlation between sex equality, measured by economic participation, education, health and political empowerment, and GDP.

Higher female labour participation allows countries to make full use of their national talent provided obstacles that make it hard for women to combine work with having children are removed. This means offering parental leave and child care, as well as allowing more flexible working hours. Tax systems too need to be looked at to remove bias.

Women have been advocating around many of these issues for the last half century. For years the same issues have been identified as roadblocks on the route to equality for women. To move this agenda forward, women must use their political leverage to ensure that the services they require to make it possible for them to work and raise families are in place. Full equality is essential if the pay gap is to disappear. If women are now the driving force in moving economies forward as the statistics increasingly show then we must use this to gain equality in the economic sphere as in all others.

## WOMEN AND POVERTY

*Gender-based power relations mean that women experience poverty differently and more forcefully than men do.*

**Nilüfer Cagatay, Trade, Gender and Poverty, 2001**

The United Nations General Assembly unanimously agreed on July 2, 2010, to overhaul the UN's complicated women's rights infrastructure, combining four agencies to create a new UN women's office. The intention is to give the new unit substantially enhanced capacity. It is hoped that this step will help resolve the many problems that still, after many years of effort, block equality for women. Women must ensure that when progress is measured, the true test will show whether it helps move women out of poverty. Equality for women is critical if this task is to be achieved. Judge the new agency on how it assists the poorest and most vulnerable of women.

Extreme poverty is defined as the lack of an adequate shelter and the lack of enough food to meet minimum nutritional needs on a daily basis. One billion people live in extreme poverty with no idea where their next meal is coming from. Another 1.5 billion live above subsistence, but are unable to advance and are still subject to problems such as inadequate sanitation and unclean drinking water. These two groups account for 40% of humanity. Every day some 20,000 die of untreated tuberculosis, malaria, diarrhoea, respiratory infections and diseases that feed upon bodies weakened by malnutrition.

Women continue to be disproportionately poor throughout the world. Poverty affects men, women, boys, and girls, but it is experienced differently by people of different ages, ethnicities, family roles and gender. The subordinate role given to women in many societies and cultures increases the disadvantage they face. It intensifies the impact of poverty on women. Income is not the only measurement of poverty, and economic growth alone will not end poverty. Change is needed in how women are perceived and treated within their society and culture. Change is also needed at the most basic and important level – how a woman is treated in her home by her husband and family.

Women's poverty matters. It matters because of the effects on women themselves and because of the effects on their children. The well-being of children cannot be divorced from that of their mothers. Tackling women's

poverty is critical to the long-term success of any poverty reduction strategy.

Relegating women to poverty has an impact on all aspects of their lives. Poor health, illiteracy, inadequate schooling, social exclusion, powerlessness and gender discrimination all contribute to poverty. To escape poverty requires women to improve their skills and capacities. To do this they must have increased access to resources, institutions and support services.

Countries that have advanced gender equality and provided reproductive health services, including family planning, that have increased the coverage and quality of education, that have responsible and accountable systems of governance have made more progress economically and, by so doing, have helped put in place the mechanisms that make it possible to lift women out of poverty.

Poverty takes a toll on the dignity of women since poor women face discrimination and abuse simply because they are poor. They are often ignored and are voiceless. They are blamed for being poor.

Many programs designed to alleviate poverty have failed because no gender analysis of the causes of poverty was done. It is essential that we recognize how the impact of poverty is different on men than it is for women. Both a gender analysis and an equity analysis are essential to fully understand the impact of poverty on the lives of women. Programs and projects to help remedy the situation will require gender budgeting to ensure that funds intended to alleviate poverty do not only assist men and children leaving women no better off.

Studies of people living in poverty generally look at households and gauge the level of poverty on the basis of household income. Any program designed to lessen poverty, using household income as the criterion, will short-change women if equality does not exist in the household. When we examine the economy, labour and labour markets through gender and equity lenses we can clearly see that results differ for men and for women in all of these spheres.

The social norms imposed on women in different regions of the world assign primary responsibility for care of the family to women while overall decision-making authority is attributed to senior males in the family. Some regions of the world have stricter rules than others governing what is permissible for women. This often limits women's ability to work outside the home or to follow certain career paths. This is seen most clearly in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.



Women are at greater risk of living in poverty than are men and they are likely to suffer more frequent and longer spells in poverty. Given the role assigned to women in the family they become the main managers of family poverty. In this role they act as shock-absorbers for the rest of the family, shielding them from the worst impacts of a very difficult life. In Africa it is often noted that women are expected to keep the soup tasting the same even when they have no money to buy any meat or vegetables to put into it. This is an example of the type of pressure put on women to maintain family nutrition with no resources. It is also a metaphor for maintaining as much normalcy as possible in the lives of the family without the resources necessary to do the job. While trying to maintain family nutrition and stem hunger pangs, it is also not uncommon, in poor households, for women and girls to receive less food than is provided for men and boys. When poor diet is combined with the build up of stress and shame that comes with being stuck in poverty there should be no doubt as to why the effects of poverty are felt more keenly by women.

Not only do poor women have to deal with people and groups outside the home, from a position of vulnerability, when they try to get food, clothing, schooling and health care for their children, but they also answer to those inside the family for being unable to provide basic needs. Inadequate funds to provide basic necessities, poor housing or homelessness, being unable to provide for children particularly in societies that value high levels of consumerism are grounds for high levels of stress.

Add to this disrespectful treatment, being ignored and being blamed for your poverty and the picture we see is grim.

Examining poverty through a gender lens only provides us with part of the picture. There is a critical interface between gender and ethnicity that is important in any analysis of women's poverty. This is why an equity lens must be used in conjunction with a gender lens. Women of some minority ethnic groups face a particularly high poverty risk. There are various and varied levels of poverty between and among minority ethnic communities themselves. The one thing they have in common is that women are the poorest of those living in poverty. Consider for a moment the situation of the Roma women in Europe or ask yourself how Indigenous women fare or what life is like for women of minority groups in African countries. Which women in India are most likely to be poor? Are scheduled castes highly represented among women living in poverty? How do women who are disabled fare in various societies? How many of us have walked past women who are begging or waiting for assistance and have seen women with disabilities struggling, even among the poor, to be able to get close to places where someone might give enough to help them eat that day

Think too of the rural/ urban divide and the additional burden for rural women who can be poor and isolated from any support services. The stress of poverty can undermine a woman's capacity to perform an effective parenting role identified as crucial in child poverty reduction strategies. Poor women have to be incredibly resourceful just to get by. They have to find social services where such services are available. Their situation is compounded when services are inaccessible, where public transport is inadequate and where community support is not available because they do not live close to anyone else.

Poor health, low self-esteem and morale, often associated with the stress of being responsible for managing the poverty of the family, can lead to depression and can have a damaging impact on women's ability to seek and find paid work. We know that women's earnings, in both two parent and single parent families, can play a crucial role in keeping families out of poverty. Not being able to find work through inadequate education and training or losing a job in a recession tilts the balance for many families between living just above the poverty line and living in abject poverty.

Poor health lessens the capacity of a person to find work. When poor women do find jobs they are often paid by the number of items produced (piece work). Poor health can lower productivity and therefore reduce earnings. A high prevalence of disease and poor health, more common among the poor, harms economic performance for individuals and for the country.

Managing poverty damages women's physical and mental health and well-being. For women living in poverty, domestic violence can also be an issue they often must contend with. All of the issues identified in the section of this paper dealing with violence against women are exacerbated when women live in poverty. In many parts of the world trafficking of women and girls into sexual slavery and prostitution is increasing as women try to escape extreme poverty. Traffickers play on the plight facing such women. 79% of human trafficking is for sexual exploitation and the victims are predominantly women and girls. This exploitation of women can be seen in any city centre or along highways. Sexual exploitation is the most documented type of trafficking but other forms of exploitation also exist that are not yet as high on the public agenda. In all forms of exploitation women and their children form the majority of those subjected to the modern slave trade. The other forms of trafficking include:

- **Forced or bonded labour; long a result as well as a cause of poverty. It is still happening but is not as well documented as trafficking for sexual exploitation.**



- Domestic servitude and forced marriage often result in poverty.
- The removal and sale of organs for transplant, often from poor women and girls is a particularly repugnant new form of trafficking.
- The exploitation of women and children in organized begging can be seen in major cities. Often those involved are moved from city to city.
- The use of children as child soldiers. This has happened in a number of countries in Africa in particular.

The 2009 UN Global Report on Trafficking (GRTP) in Persons provides some surprising new information. A disproportionate number of women are involved in human trafficking, not only as victims but also as traffickers. It is surprising to note that women who prey on other poor women as human traffickers have a more prominent role in present-day slavery than in most other forms of crime. The GRTP states that in 30% of the countries that provided information for its report on the gender of traffickers, women make up the largest proportion of traffickers. Cases are cited in the report where former victims have become perpetrators. Women are used to lure other women into leaving home with the promise of getting work only to end up trafficked into prostitution. Women everywhere must condemn this. It cannot be ignored.

Trafficking is largely national or regional but some is international. Trafficking is usually carried out by people whose nationality is the same as that of the victims. In the cases of international trafficking, Europe is the destination for victims from the widest range of countries. Victims from Asia are trafficked to the widest range of destinations. The Americas are important both as the origin and destination of victims in the human slave trade.

To try to address this problem, where poor women and children are the victims, we need to understand that the causes that make people available to traffickers are different. When a father in Asia sells his under-age daughter to traffickers the reason is different than it is when women and girls in Africa are kidnapped to provide services to a para-military group of killers. It is different again from the reasons that push an illegal immigrant into a sweat shop in the Americas. All of these are different from the sophisticated, violent criminal organizations trafficking women and children largely to Europe and North America. What they all have in common is that they prey upon the poor. When we advocate for measures to rescue victims and punish criminals we must ensure that the victims are not penalized more than they already have been and we must encourage laws that punish the offenders according to their crimes.

When poor women are able to enter the labour force their income is generally allocated to the welfare of their children. Poor women enter the labour market with lower levels of health, nutrition, education and skills than do poor men. The jobs available to them are at the lowest rates of pay and generally without benefits. Gender differentials in pay and working conditions exist at all levels of work in the labour market. Neither increasing economic growth nor female participation in the labour force has changed these differentials. Collective agreements rarely exist for the work available to poor, uneducated women. Much of the work they do is sub-contracted labour or domestic work or where they work from home and are isolated from others working for the same employer. This makes it very difficult for them to organize and working in isolation leaves them vulnerable to continued abuse.

When poor women do earn an income, a significant proportion of them indicate they have little say in how the income is used. In South Asian countries the proportion of married women aged 15–49 not involved in decisions related to their earnings is higher in India (18%), Nepal (14%) and Bangladesh (13%) compared with countries in Central and South-East Asia, where the corresponding proportions range from 3 to 7%.

Women are also disadvantaged by statutory and customary laws with respect to inheritance and property rights. In twenty five of 42 Asian countries gender inequality with regard to inheritance rights still exists. The situation in Africa is similar. Mercy Gondwe, 51, from Malawi, was married for 34 years when her husband died in 2008. She assumed she would inherit the land they had cultivated together since their marriage. But this was not to be. Mercy's brother-in-law took over ownership of the land the day of the funeral, because tradition dictates that only a man has the right to own land. Mercy and her six children have no choice but to keep living with her in-laws. The terms of the bride price her husband paid when they married stipulates that a woman and her children belong to her husband and his family. Mercy and her children still grow crops on the land, but her brother-in-law tells her what to do with the produce. He takes the tobacco to the auction and decides what to do with the money. Mercy and her husband were considered quite well-off when they owned their land. Her children went to school as well as helping out on the farm. School is now no longer possible. The government of Malawi is considering legislation to change land tenure laws but progress is slow. Across sub Saharan Africa, customary law is hindering efforts to reform land tenure and increase women's access to ownership of land, this despite the fact that women form the majority of subsistence farmers in Africa.

In Vietnam, 61% of land titles are in the name men and 18% are joint titles. In rural areas, 8% of land titles are in the name of women, compared with 87% in the name of men. Only 5% are joint titles. Land and property ownership are important means of helping women escape from poverty or, conversely, are a way to stop them from becoming poor. In countries where property passes to men, a woman who has not been poor can find her life changed when she is widowed and the male relatives of her husband are entitled to the property. Mercy's story is, sadly, not unusual.

The right to own or inherit property is fundamental to self-sufficiency and a step forward in the equality of women. Without equality women will not escape poverty.

The percentage of married women participating in family decision-making is low in Asia, although not as low as it is in Africa. Women from the South-East Asian countries of Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines have more decision-making power with regard to household purchases than do women from the South Asian countries of Bangladesh, India and Nepal. The proportion of women who usually make decisions by themselves or with their husbands on major household purchases in the South-East Asian countries cited at slightly over 79%. In contrast, in the three South Asian countries it barely reaches 50%. When women have a say in decisions that have an impact on their lives it has important results for the family. Having a say in how many children she will have leads to fewer children who have better nutrition and education leading to better employment opportunities and less child labour. Who makes important decisions in a family can result in whether women have any opportunity to improve their situation.

While economic growth and rising incomes help reduce gender inequality, they do not break down all barriers to women's economic participation and development. Economic growth must be accompanied by basic legal and human rights guarantees that improve women's equality. Ensuring basic labour rights that protect women at work helps in the workplace. Ensuring institutions understand and support women's rights is a necessary step in society. Both are needed for change.

Part of the gender analysis that must be done needs to look at power structures, nutrition, health and education. When combined with an equity analysis we can see who are excluded from specific areas and where our efforts need to be targeted. Women work longer hours than men in nearly every country and a large proportion of women's total work time is spent on unpaid work in the home. Work done in the home that is not remunerated is not included in national accounting systems. It results in

a lack of support for women since what countries do not count, they do not support.

Programs that promote gender equality in education benefit both individuals and households and help national economic growth. Improving women's education helps reduce fertility and child malnutrition and improves maternal and child survival. In countries where girls are only half as likely to go to school as boys, there are, on average, 21 more infant deaths per 1,000 live births than in countries with no education gender gap. Educating and empowering women is also key to halting the AIDS epidemic.

Poverty reduction strategies must aim to reduce the enormous burden of poverty carried by poor women around the world. It is not sufficient to acknowledge that poor people are both women *and* men.

- Poverty is gendered and complex.
- Men and women are often poor for different reasons, and they experience poverty differently.
- Men and women have differing capacities to withstand or escape poverty.
- Gender inequalities and gender power relations produce the differences experienced by poor men or poor women.
- Women are more vulnerable to chronic poverty because of gender inequalities in the distribution of income, access to credit, command over property or control over earned income, as well as gender biases in labour markets.
- If national governments are to reduce poverty, they must have strategies accompanied by the necessary budgets to address women's poverty separate from programs to alleviate poverty for men. If this does not happen poor women will be left on the sidelines and remain the poorest of the poor.
- Development programs must be scrutinized through gender and equity lenses to be effective for women. Programs for women only must be looked at through an equity lens to see which women benefit and who are on the outside looking in.
- Poverty must be analysed as a gendered phenomenon. This requires disaggregation of all data by sex and by designated group.
- We must recognize that macroeconomic policy and national budgets can be gendered just as budgets of organizations and unions can be. Gender advocates need to develop the skills to analyse budgets in terms of their differential impact on women and men.

If the feminization of poverty is to be ended it requires all of the above measures to be taken. Despite the fact that we have been well-aware of the gendered reality of poverty for at least 30 years we are still in a situation where the number of women in poverty is increasing at a faster rate than for men. We must question whether addressing women's poverty is a high priority among policy-makers. Addressing children growing up in poverty has a higher profile with policy-makers and we tend to overlook the fact that children are poor because their parents are poor. It is particularly the poverty of women that is behind the poverty of so many children.

This is an issue that interweaves equality, human rights, powerlessness, violence, education, health issues and economic issues under one rubric. The solutions are complex but solving this issue is of priority.

## WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION MAKING

Throughout history, women have made a difference within their countries, communities and across the globe under the most difficult of circumstances. Whether they face natural disasters, war or economic depression women are counted on to keep communities and families functioning. So making tough decisions is nothing new for women. Despite this experience, there is still profound unease with women in positions of political power and a range of barriers face women who enter politics. For those who do make it into government, the portfolios they have as ministers are often considered to be less senior than those held by men. We do see exceptions to this but we must be careful not to interpret the exception as the norm.

While a number of factors contribute to this situation, the role of the media in assessing leadership styles, personal appearance and information on the private lives of female politicians is influential and often shows bias. If we take the North American context as an example, an examination of the treatment given to two high profile women during their political careers would serve as good case studies. Both Hillary Clinton (USA) and Belinda Stronach (Canada) were put under the microscope. What they wore, how they did their hair, where they went were reported on constantly and there was open season on their private lives. Fortunately there are signs in other countries that is becoming passé and the election of women to top positions in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Australia is a hopeful sign.

The current global average of 18.4% of women elected to national assemblies shows that while there are more women in governments today than ever before, there is still a great deal to be done to achieve parity in this domain. Getting more women elected to positions where power can be used to influence decisions that will have a gender impact remains an important and worthwhile goal. In the best scenarios, in national assemblies women exceed 30% of representatives in only 22 countries, some of which have special measures in place. Rwanda has the highest number of women elected to parliament with 48.8% of seats slightly ahead of Sweden with 47.3%. Rwanda has a 30% quota of positions in parliament for women. At the other end of the scale is Yemen with 0.3% of women representatives in parliament. From 1998 to 2008 the representation of women in governments increased by 8%. This was an improvement over the 1% rise in the two decades from 1975 to 1995. However the overall numbers still show that women are largely excluded from power and decision making in public life in many countries. If we maintain the current rate of progress it will take until 2045 before most developing countries reach the parity zone -where neither sex holds more than 60% of seats- unless special measures are put in place. While it is good to see a rise in the number of women in various levels of political activity, we must recognize that those who do succeed still face cultural and practical barriers to the exercise of power in these roles.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 monitor progress on women's participation in public decision-making and in economic activity. We are only four years away from 2015, the year when the MDGs should be achieved by all countries. Progress is mixed at best.

In the political domain, we have come to recognise that we must work on two fronts if the commitments to women are to be achieved. We must continue to work to achieve parity within elected assemblies at all levels and we must also continue to develop ways to ensure that those who are elected are accountable to us. Gender-responsive, accountability systems need to be put in place nationally and internationally. In too many countries, even where the constitution or laws prohibit it, women can still be denied basic rights such as equal pay for work of equal or equivalent value. They are still overlooked for promotion. The combination of glass ceilings and sticky floors keeps them in place. Many women may still be dismissed if they become pregnant or they may be bullied at work and have no recourse to right such violations. In the developing world, women who try to claim land to which they have a right may find their claim disputed by village elders or by their husbands or other family members. In extreme circumstances they face violence for being so bold. Women who are widowed may find themselves dispossessed and with-



out shelter or livelihood. Women seeking care during childbirth may be expected to pay bribes for medical attention and women who have been victims of sexual violence may encounter police or judges with little sympathy for their suffering. For all of these reasons the effort to get more women elected to positions of power remains a matter of critical importance.

It is often said that women do not support other women who run for office or that women who attain power act in ways that mimic their male colleagues. At times this may be true but we must recognise that the women who are elected to office are in a minority situation and they have to struggle to get their voices heard. They need our support to do what we expect of them. We must also be careful to hold them to the same standard that we use to judge others. We have been known to judge women more harshly since we expect them to achieve so much so quickly.

Increasing the number of women who hold political office is a matter of democratic justice and human rights. It is a means of ensuring that our issues are put on the agenda and it is a way of demanding more government accountability to women. Our issues arise from the women's agenda but we have shown that they are actually societal issues and they should be as important to men as they are to women. Women's groups still need to exist to identify issues as they arise and to develop strategies to move them to the main agenda, through the policy and budget process and into action.

In and of itself, increasing the numbers of elected women representatives will not ensure better accountability and responsiveness to women's needs. Those elected must be aware of, and committed to, gender-sensitive governance and accountability. This should hold true for all elected officials. The way forward requires both men and women to be inclusive and responsive in their decision making styles. Every decision made must be examined through both a gender and an equity lens if the objective is to shape public policy and make both the process and the institutions responsible for implementing gender sensitive decisions.

The experiences of women vary across and within countries, regions and political systems. These experiences also vary according to class, race, age and ethnicity. Since, as has been stated several times in this paper, women are not a single category the interests of some, usually upper or middle class, educated, urban women tend to be better represented than are those of poor, uneducated, rural women. We cannot assume, therefore, that all women share the same political interests. From the point of view of women trade unionists, political power will be seen to be working for women when it is

used to address the needs and concerns of all women, particularly the poorest women who have the least power. This is not necessarily the same agenda as other sectors of society. Political accountability to women will have improved when there is gender-balanced resource allocation combined with policy initiatives that address the multitude of concerns of women. Whether these are leave for family care, pay equity, an end to violence against women, an end to human trafficking of women and girls into sexual slavery or negotiating a solution to end war or other conflicts, such issues affect both genders and women must have an equal voice and equal impact when the power brokers make the policy and budget decisions to deal with them.

Where we have made some progress we cannot rest on our laurels. We can take nothing for granted in our attempts to encourage and support women who are willing to take on senior political roles. We must also not lose sight of the fact that it is easy to reverse direction and gains made can disappear quickly. This happens when women's rights are denied, women's access to public decision making is obstructed, the financing programs that help fund legal action are removed or when policy is enacted that reinforces women's unequal status.

There are reasons for optimism in many regions but vigilance is necessary to continue to make progress. In the industrialised world we see the emergence of a gender gap in voting behaviour. Political parties now understand that, as a group, women often vote differently from men. This knowledge is changing how politicians act to get our votes. Those courting the women's vote now show an understanding that women and their allies will identify and mobilize around an issue of common concern. We must use this to move our agenda forward. If politicians want our votes they must know we will hold them accountable for the results they deliver on social and economic issues of importance to at least half of the population.

One way to hold governments' accountable is to insist upon a gender-responsive budget analysis that requires ministries of finance and parliamentarians to differentiate the public spending on services for women and men. We can do the same in our unions. Public audits of local government spending enable women to see how resources are spent locally and to evaluate, for example, whether providing shelters for women victims of domestic violence is given due consideration. Until decision-makers whether in governments, unions or organisations agree to do a gender audit of the budget, women's groups should do this work and make it public. Citizens' report cards that survey the gender sensitivity of public services help identify whether authorities, at all levels, are improving their commitment to gender sensitive

governance. Because of family commitments women are often more active locally than regionally or nationally. Acting locally, women can be involved to hold elected officials accountable at every level.

The women's movement has helped form a groundswell of citizen activism against impunity. Women's efforts to make sure that decision-makers on women's rights are held answerable to women have helped fuel this activism. Women's activism has changed the way we understand the exercise of power. Part of this is demanding accountability from those we entrust with power. As an example of how activism can change outlook and accountability, we can look at the atrocities conducted against women in recent conflicts that led to mobilisation for women's human rights. In Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Liberia, post-conflict restructuring of police services has seen efforts to recruit more women into security services. Training programs now promote better understanding of the specific difficulties faced by women in such situations.

It has taken many years to convince decision-makers that women often experience government decisions differently from men. Political accountability to women begins with increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, but it cannot stop there. It requires governance reforms that give public institutions the incentives, skills, information and procedures to respond effectively to women's needs.

### TO MOVE FORWARD, WE NEED...

**Strong mobilization.** As union members this should be our strength. It is for you in this conference to identify the current areas requiring renewed mobilisation. The work women have been engaged in for decades must continue but it must also be fine-tuned. In addition to getting women elected, accountability of all elected parliamentarians, councillors and union representatives must be paramount. Learn from how important women were in challenging regimes in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Nepal, Peru and the Philippines in the past. Women also mobilised for peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Uganda, Burundi, Timor-Leste and the Balkans. They mobilised for legislative change to stop genital mutilation in Senegal and Burkina Faso. They have worked hard to guarantee inheritance rights in Rwanda. In Brazil and Turkey they have toiled to ensure rights in marriage. Women in Kenya faced violence when they stood for election but they stayed the course. There are many examples to learn from. The experience women gained in such situations have led to their increased political participation.

Support women who take the lead in their country to right wrongs.

**Strong representation** is critical. Establishing quotas has been an effective tool for supporting women's political engagement. It is still not a popular way in some parts of the world but quotas are effective when they have some teeth. Quotas and other special measures, such as reserved seats, are a proven means for supporting women's political engagement. They are currently used at the national and sub-national levels in 95 countries. In elections held in 2007, the average representation of women was 19.3% in countries that used some type of electoral quota, as opposed to 14.7% for countries without quotas, regardless of electoral system. In 1992, India amended its constitution to add gender quotas to all locally elected positions. Village councils, or panchayats, must reserve one third of their seats for women. Currently, over one million women hold elected office in panchayats and over two million have held these positions to date. In 2005, the Women's Reservation Bill was passed, providing a similar one-third quota for women in Parliament and the State Assembly. The experience gained at the local level by women in India will now pay dividends when they move to the state and national political levels.

Critics of quotas or reservations tend to cite them as anti-democratic. Human rights legislation in many countries in the industrialized world requires pro-active policies to redress the discriminatory policies that endured for so many years against various identified groups. Women are one such group and quotas are a pro-active policy to help right past discrimination. There are also those who claim that those who are elected in a reserved seat or as part of a quota system do not have the capacity to gain a seat through open election against male opponents. Women need to address this issue directly. Political networks, access to funds and political power brokers have been part of the system that has guaranteed male candidates success for generations. Women did not have this opportunity since they had to mobilize firstly to get the vote and then to be accepted into the political process. The political work given to women was menial and it is only within the last 50 years or so that women have been considered capable of being given added responsibility. Once again, don't see the exception as the norm. Women struggled to reach the stage where they can present their candidacy for elections. If, in some areas, there is still a need for quotas to help even the playing field do not apologize. The playing field was not and is not level. Use the tools available to help achieve parity without apology.

Within the trade union movement quotas and reserved seats have enabled women to ensure that their voices

*on the move for equality*



are present in the policy debates that have an impact on their lives both in and out of the workplace. This enabled women to gain experience in what was a highly male dominated field and to be accepted as candidates for higher office. There is still strong resistance to quotas in many countries as well as in some trade unions. Quotas ensure that women are able to get a foot in the door in areas where male domination and patriarchy remain resolute.

**Strong legislation and policy** make up the third strand of what is required. Stronger attention is paid to women's issues when higher numbers of women are in parliament. A 2008 study of UK politics confirms that since the number of women in parliament doubled to 18.2% in the 1997 election, issues of special concern to women – such as childcare and social protection – have received more attention.

**Strong implementation of legislation** is required. In some circumstances although the political will may exist, governments may not have the capacity to ensure that gender equality policies are carried out. International aid programs should be examined to see if they are gender sensitive and accountable. As an example of what might be considered women could mobilise to help ensure progress is made, and seen to be made, on the recent Afghan government commitment to increase women's participation at all levels in the civil service to 30% by 2013. At present 22% of all regular government employees are women with only 9% of them at the decision-making level. The task is going to be difficult. All donors to Afghanistan should help provide the necessary training for women to assist Afghanistan achieve this goal.

While there is still a long way to go to achieve parity in both governments and within trade union hierarchies progress is being made. Women are effective in organisation and mobilisation and have shown their expertise in policy development and implementation. They must strengthen their networks at all levels - local, regional, national and international - show that sororities can be as strong and effective as fraternities. Most importantly, power has to be used to help the most vulnerable, the most marginalised of our sisters. Accountability must show the promotion and implementation of gender-sensitive and gender balanced policy initiatives.

During this conference women will have an opportunity to examine whether states have created an environment that encourages women's political participation as voters, candidates, elected representatives and office-holders. You must also examine what factors will help get women elected to public office and how you can help do so. Once elected how can you help women change the policy agenda to ensure delivery on promises to women. These are your challenges. Use the progress you have helped achieve to build a better tomorrow. Continue the struggle – many depend on you.

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*On The Move For Equality, Education International's First World Women's Conference, provides the space to share, analyze, and identify collective mechanisms of achieving gender equality in unions, and through unions, in education and society. Much work remains to be done - despite enabling legislation in many countries, not a single one can claim gender pay equity, for example. The issues are global, but the impacts vary greatly in their severity, most especially on the quality of life of women and their families. The struggle for equality, particularly gender, is persistently difficult, a chronic problem, easy to talk about but difficult to make real change.*

*In Bangkok, union participants will reflect on how to transform will into action, to harness the strength of all members in the collective efforts to achieve education and equality for all, decent work for decent lives in democratic, caring and socially just societies.*

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