

Human Rights Bulletin October 2015 Economic Empowerment



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Issue Fourteen

As the holiday shopping season approaches, this month's bulletin focuses on the issue of Women's Economic Empowerment and the disparity between men's and women's financial well-being at all socio-economic levels. In this bulletin, we recognize the prevalance of laws worldwide that disadvantage women economically, challenges for women in the media industry, ways that NGOs and individuals are working creatively to address financial disparity, and steps you can take to help. Don't forget to make your plans for the 16 Days Campaign, which addresses the right to education, a key component in women's quest to gain economic equality. In addition, consider ways that you and your club can promote financial literacy among your own members and economic security for less advantaged women. Despite economic inequality between males and females, women as a group have tremendous buying power. If we have the courage and resourcefulness to put our money where our mouth is, collectively we can bring about a narrowing of the economic gap between men and women. Will you help?

After months of planning, the HRTF's trip to Rwanda begins

next week. You can join us vicariously by watching the FAWCO Facebook page for trip updates. You might also consider reading *A Thousand Hills to Heaven* by American

Koru: A Symbol for Economic Empowerment

by Mary Adams, AWC, the Hague

Anne Firth Murray's book From Outrage to Courage,

upon which her Stanford course is based, focuses on health and human rights for women. On the subject of the global economy, Firth states: "Women's work is unrecognized and undervalued. The majority of the 3.3 billion people living on \$2 a day or less are women. In



noru.jpg

addition, the gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty has continued to widen in the past decade, a phenomenon commonly referred to as 'the feminization of poverty.' " Women's poverty results in subordination and unequal access to education, food, healthcare and paid employment.

One of the wonderful things about Firth's book is that after illustrating the dire situation for women in the workplace, she demonstrates how women are, nevertheless, gaining ground. Every chapter of Firth's book is illustrated with Koru images. Koru is a Maori word symbolizing the unfolding of the fern frond towards the light: but it also represents a

Josh Ruxin who moved to Rwanda with his wife to do development work and ended up opening a restaurant called <u>Heaven</u>, where we will have our farewell dinner.

Economic Empowerment

by Therese Hartwell, AW of the Eastern Province



guardian.co.tt

Despite small gains in gender equity, women around the world still lag far behind men with regard to economic opportunities and economic security. While these discrepancies are deeply grounded in cultural norms and traditions, they have also been legally institutionalized in many countries. The World Bank recently published a study, <u>Women, Business and the</u> <u>Law</u>, which evaluates laws worldwide that contribute to women's economic inequality.

The study looked at laws and regulations that affect women's economic opportunities in seven areas: accessing institutions, using property, getting a job, providing incentives to work, going to court, building credit and protecting women from violence. Out of the 173 economies reviewed in the study,155 have at least one law that impedes women's economic opportunities, 100 have gender-based job restrictions, 46 have no laws specifically protecting women from domestic violence, and in 18 husbands can legally prevent their wives from working. The study notes that these legal inequities lead to fewer girls attending secondary school relative to boys, fewer women working or running businesses and a wider gender wage gap. The study provides some good news: during the past two years, 65 economies carried out reforms increasing women's economic opportunities, with the Middle East and North Africa adding significantly more reforms than in the past.

The gender disparity in economic empowerment doesn't just impact women. A study by the <u>McKinsey Global Institute</u> found that "if every country matched the progress toward gender parity of its fastest improving neighbor, global GDP could increase by up to \$12 trillion by 2025."

What would an economy look like if it actually worked for women? A recent <u>article in the Guardian</u> reviewed the 2015-2016 <u>Progress of the World's Women</u> report published by the United Nations. Based on the report, the article specified that in such an economy women would have access to decent jobs and labor markets, women would no longer be penalized for caring for their children and relatives, social policies, such as the provision of childcare, would work for women, women would have a say in decision-making, and policy makers would actually follow through on promised improvements. Economic disparity between genders is not inevitable, but it does require an investment and political will. new beginning, renewal, and hope for the future. For impoverished women, koru means economic empowerment.

Grassroots NGOs and activists act as hothouses for the feminization of the economy. Economic empowerment has many facets from rural to urban situations: micro lending programs; financial and practical skills workshops; vocational training; advocacy for women's property rights; creativity centers; literacy courses; women becoming decision-makers in their villages through community education programs; gender equality; addressing housing needs for professional women; wage gaps; healthcare benefits; political and legal changes against labor exploitation; educating youth to understand economic opportunities and tools to build their assets; and a thousand more tiny efforts that are happening all over the world as women begin to experience koru. When women thrive...communities, the environment, and future generations thrive. - <u>Women's Earth Alliance</u>



http://www.etonline.com/photo/2015/07/24162867/640_womens_w orld_cup_champions_2015_479604718.jpg

Juggling Motherhood and Employment

Last summer the US Women's Soccer Team thrilled us on their way to their first World Cup Championship in 16 years. You may not know, however, that several members of the team are mothers of young children. These women face not only the usual challenges of juggling employment and motherhood but also the added complexities of spending so much time on the road away from their children. Hear what three true soccer moms say about these demands <u>HERE</u>.

Each One, Teach One!

The American Women's Club

The AWC of Lagos, Nigeria recently launched an innovative new initiative called Each One, Teach One! The program

16 Days Campaign

The theme of the Rutgers 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign for 2015 is "From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Make Education Safe for All!". The campaign theme "recognizes the dire situation for millions of girls and boys, and young women and men, whose



universal human right to education is daily impacted or cut short due to violence, lack of resources, and discrimination."

The Campaign takes place over 16 days: November 25 to December 10. We encourage your club to participate in the Campaign by learning more about the inspiring life and work of Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani teen who was shot for advocating for a girl's right to go to school, survived the attack and ultimately won the Nobel Peace Prize. Below are suggested activities:

1. Encourage your members to read IAm Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban and plan a book discussion.

2. Go as a group to see *He Named Me Malala*, a documentary about this courageous young woman premiering in the US October 2 and internationally in November. Watch the trailer <u>HERE</u>.

3. Plan a screening of *Malala: A Girl from Paradise*, available on DVD. Find out how <u>*HERE*</u>.

If Malala's story inspires your club, we hope you will consider taking further action to address a girl's right to education.

One action you can take immediately to support education for girls is to sign Women Thrive's petition standing with the families in Chibok, Nigeria whose daughters are still missing after being kidnapped over a year ago for attending school. Sign the petition <u>HERE</u>.

Please let us know how your club plans to participate by emailing us at <u>humanrights@fawco.org</u>.

Geena Davis Institute V on Gender in Media

advantage of the skills possessed by various club members to create a

Women's Development Program to empower both club and community participants. The club chose "Financial Literacy" as their inaugural topic. Financial experts from within and outside of the club presented talks on topics such as the 'Top 10 Essentials to Financial Planning," "You and Your Credit" and "How to Boost Your Income." The club hopes to hold future program sessions twice annually on topics such as Health/Wellness, Leadership, Personal Finance, Entrepreneurship, Marriage, Motherhood, Tourism and more! For information on how your club could plan a similar program, contact AWC of Lagos President, Patrenia Onuoha, at <u>Patrenia.Onuoha@shell.com</u>.

How Can You Help?

Are you or your club interested in helping women achieve economic empowerment? If so, check out <u>Empower</u> <u>Women</u>, an organization dedicated to empowering women to achieve their full economic potential.



microfinance.jpeg

You might also consider supporting a micro-finance organization. Micro-finance describes financial services, such as the supply of loans, savings, and other basic financial services to low-income individuals or to those who do not have access to typical banking services. Check out <u>Kiva</u>, recommended by Mary Adams, or <u>Women's Microfinance</u> <u>Initiative</u>, one of the finalists for the current FAWCO Target Program. By coincidence, the Capstone Senior Team from the Bullis School in Potomac, MD, where HRTF member Karen Lewis's children attend school, recently studied the WMI loan program's impact from a local woman's perspective. They created a video to publicize how small businesses help alleviate poverty and improve household living standards for rural women in East Africa. View it <u>HERE</u>.

Many of us travel frequently, but have you considered how you might support women in tourism, a male-dominated industry in many countries? Rickshaw Travel in the UK has a new series of travelogues from the female point of view, intended to be companions to traditional guides. The first book, *The World of Women: Tanzania* includes

contact information for women-owned hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and other businesses. It also depicts stories of women's work in Tanzania in coffee growing, jewelry making, seaweed harvesting, and Tinga-Tinga painting. Read about other ways you can support women-owned travel-related businesses <u>HERE</u>.

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Refunee Relief

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Women in the Media

by Betsy Cook Speer, AW Surrey

Even at the highest earning levels, such as the entertainment industry, women fall behind men in employment opportunities and income. This disparity affects not only the women themselves but the general public as well. Recently, London hosted the 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in the Media, sponsored by The Geena Davis Institute, BFI and WFTV. The Institute's work focuses on highlighting the huge influence TV and film has on our societies and on our own identities.

Davis pointed out that only 17% of business leaders in the US are women, which interestingly correlates to the percentage of extras on screen - figures that are not unrelated, she suggests. Also, Meryl Streep who has been raising the issue in the US, argues that men and women have differing tastes, and if men are the dominant voices commenting on film culture, then it's a one-sided story, ultimately affecting box office and future production choices.

There are huge disparities in the numbers of women directors, producers and writers. Hence, women's power and the sharing of women's stories is underrepresented, underfunded, and undersupported. So the Geena Davis Institute is working to educate and influence those who do have power (studios, writers, etc) to include more positive female role models at the very earliest exposure that children have to show girls AND boys that females should be treated as equals and share power and leadership roles.

As a case in point, the institute believes that 'If she can see it, she can be it." Research has shown that one popular "character" portrayed on screen is the Forensic Scientist, and many of the actors who play these roles are women. Back in the real world, the number of women going to college to train as Forensic Scientists "has skyrocketed" since shows such as CSI have been on our screens, with a ratio of 3:1 of female to male students. To read more on the 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in the Media 2015 click <u>HERE</u>.

EXTENDED DEADLINE for clubs to participate in 100 Women Debate ON-LINE

See this email from BBC Presenter Karnie Sharp who has invited FAWCO

clubs to participate in a "chat" with BBC on December 1, which will be held from 08:00 GMT - 18:00 GMT. Click <u>here</u> for more details.

If your club is interested, please email <u>Karnie Sharp</u> (and cc <u>president@fawco.org</u> so we know which clubs are participating) your list of participants and designated leader (including email) no later than *October 31*.

This is an exciting opportunity for FAWCO clubs to shine so we hope to hear from you soon.



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As the worldwide refugee crisis deepens, many FAWCO members have asked how they can help. In response, FAWCO UN Liaison, Laurie Richardson, in conjunction with the UN Team and the Human Rights

Photo by Therese Hartwell

Task Force, has put together information on ways that FAWCO clubs are working to assist refugees and ways your club can help. Read Laurie's article <u>HERE</u>. If your club is taking action to aid refugees, please let Laurie know of your efforts at <u>unfawco@gmail.com</u>.

For a glimpse of what it is like to be a refugee risking drowning in an attempt to find a better life, view a short video from Samaritan's Purse, an NGO assisting refugees <u>*HERE*</u>. And if you need any extra reasons to be concerned about refugees, read this <u>*heartrending account*</u> of the horrific choices refugee mothers are forced to make.

Get Creative

Traditional job opportunities are often closed to women, especially to those who are poor or uneducated, requiring creativity and ingenuity to take over. FAWCO knows all about Free the Girls' use of donated bras to economically empower women who have escaped from sex trafficking.



terawarner.com

Consider a similar but different program started by two high school students in Jordan who collect donated special occassion dresses, shoes and purses, and distribute them to impoverished women who earn money from renting them. In Khatmandu, Nepal, Beni Products has an even more innovative approach. Workers collect potatoe chip, chocolate, cookie and noodle wrappings from the streets, school playgrounds, cinemas and mountain trails; synthetic rice bags from hotels and restaurants; and rubber inner tubes from garages and turn the products into unusual handicraft items. Not only do these enterprises

provide employment opportunities for women, they also reduce trash by reusing castoffs, contributing to a healthier environment.

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