



empowering women worldwide since 1931

## Human Rights Bulletin October 2015 Economic Empowerment



farmafrica.org

### In This Issue

[Economic Empowerment for Women](#)

[16 Days Campaign](#)

[Women in the Media](#)

[Koru: A Symbol for Economic Empowerment](#)

[Juggling Motherhood and Employment](#)

[Each One, Teach One!](#)

[How Can You Help?](#)

[Refugee Relief](#)

[Get Creative](#)

## 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 prevalence 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

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.



noru.jpg

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 [Heaven](#), 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, [Women, Business and the Law](#), 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 [McKinsey Global Institute](#) 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 [article in the Guardian](#) reviewed the 2015-2016 [Progress of the World's Women](#) 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.

the unfolding of the form from towards the light, but it also represents a 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. - [Women's Earth Alliance](#)



[http://www.etonline.com/photo/2015/07/24162867/640\\_womens\\_world\\_cup\\_champions\\_2015\\_479604718.jpg](http://www.etonline.com/photo/2015/07/24162867/640_womens_world_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 [HERE](#).

## Each One, Teach One!



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



## 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 [HERE](#).

**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 [here](#) for more details.

If your club is interested, please email [Karnie Sharp](#) (and cc [president@fawco.org](mailto:president@fawco.org) 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.



Photo by Therese Hartwell

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

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 [HERE](#). If your club is taking action to aid refugees, please let Laurie know of your efforts at [unfawco@gmail.com](mailto:unfawco@gmail.com).

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 [HERE](#). And if you need any extra reasons to be concerned about refugees, read this [heartrending account](#) 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 occasion 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.

The Human Rights Task Force  
humanrights@fawco.org

Task Force Chair: Therese Hartwell  
Committee Members: Betsy Cook Speer, Karen Lewis, Tonya Teichert, Erica Higbie,  
Laurie Richardson, Madeline Hendricks, Lauren Mescon

FAWCO  
[www.fawco.org](http://www.fawco.org)

**This is a no-reply message for FAWCO's Human Rights Task Force Subscribers.**