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“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and
further actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by International Federation for Family Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Empowering women: educating men and women as a form of prevention of violence against women and girls

According to the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women, up to 70 per cent of women suffer some sort of physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic violence. This finding calls urgently for a commitment to act in defence of abused women and girls around the world.

Power and control issues are at the core of violent and abusive behaviours. The signs are usually manifested over time. For example, a strong predictor of violent tendencies in adulthood is the amount of violence a child experiences in the household in which the person was reared, as noted by the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress. The effect is often as insidious as it is subtle, as many children exposed to an environment of ongoing violence and abuse internalize and come to accept this abusive behaviour as "normal". Thus, the infamous "cycle of violence" is facilitated and reinforced through intergenerational propagation. For this reason, all institutions addressing violence against women and girls emphasize quality parenting as the cornerstone of a loving, nurturing and safe environment.

Prevention and education

Men play a very important role, as they are key for respecting women and appreciating the good that they bring to society. Indeed, there is a growing awareness that men, in partnership with women, must play a significant role in ending violence against women. There has therefore been an increase in programmes and activities focusing on men's roles in preventing violence against women.

Successful prevention programmes are comprehensive, relevant, intensive, incorporate positive messages, and may employ one or more of the following strategies: fostering empathy towards victims; changing individual men's attitudes and behaviours; teaching men to intervene against other men's behaviour; and using social marketing strategies to foster positive norms.

In the field of education, both adults and children can develop learning skills that are self-reflective, critical and process oriented. For example, in the Asia-Pacific region, the International Center for Research on Women has worked diligently to prevent violence against women and girls by educating children in schools to rightly acknowledge positive change. They note how "notions of gender roles, appropriate behaviours, and the resolution of conflict through the use of violence are all learned, and hence can be influenced. Primary prevention efforts are necessary as they offer the possibility of preventing the use of violence before it begins. They also provide alternatives of behaviours to children who have witnessed violence in their homes and other intimate surroundings".

Similarly, the International Federation for Family Development dedicates significant efforts to educating both women and men by stressing a critical-thinking methodology. The organization works in more than 60 countries around the world helping families achieve healthy relationships, providing parents with the tools to team up to make important family decisions, respect each other, become good models for their children, share responsibilities, determine how to balance work and family, etc. In the same vein, the Nigerian Women's Board Educational Cooperation

Society is working for “a Nigeria where all persons have access to education of good quality, and personal development”. Our modern society underestimates the challenges arising from parenthood and familial relationships in general. We see a clear need to facilitate education for parents as they endeavour to raise healthy, well-adjusted children, the leaders of tomorrow.

International Federation for Family Development teaches communication skills through its courses, which lead to a better understanding of the important differences between women and men with the goal of fostering the mutual respect and cooperation necessary to reach their common goals together, through measures tailored to parents’ expectations and children’s needs without influencing them ideologically. Nevertheless, it is difficult to accept that there are many countries around the world where women are still kept from being fully integrated into social, political and economic life. Unfortunately, as noted in the report of Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls, convened by UN-Women and other organizations in Bangkok in September 2012, “prevention programming remains weak in virtually every humanitarian setting around the world”. Efficient, effective prevention programmes are required now more than ever, and we urge Governments to adopt initiatives, such as the Violence Prevention Initiative of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada, reflecting “Government’s commitment to addressing the problem of violence in this province”. The people who work with victims of violence use the “equality wheel” to focus on “the concepts in relationships that promote respect, equality and demonstrate appropriate ways of interacting in healthy relationships and ways that people who abuse can now choose to act non-violently”.

Empowering women

As the Secretary-General wrote in the foreword to the UN-Women Annual Report 2010-2011, “When we empower women, we empower communities, nations and the entire human family”.

Empowering woman can take many forms. For example, empowering women who are mothers is particularly important because they have a strong influence in their families and in their communities as agents of peace. A 2011 study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) entitled *Doing Better for Families* shows that mothers who have access to flexible work are most likely to have the number of children they want. In this sense, policies that empower a woman as a mother will directly empower families and increase their well-being.

Empowering women who work is important because a greater presence of women in society will help to manifest the contradictions present when society is organized solely according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity. Women should also receive equal pay for equal work and protection for working mothers should be provided. Policies should focus on conciliation and balance between family and work life, recognizing the family and highlighting its role and the value of having a successful family life.

Empowering women who are in political positions is important because they will increasingly play a part in the solution of the serious problems of the future. They will also remind Governments of the need to condemn those who abuse women sexually and pass laws that defend them from such violence. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works to ensure that “women have a real

voice in all governance institutions, from the judiciary to the civil service, as well as in the private sector and civil society, so they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision-making and influence the decisions that will determine the future of their families and countries”.

Conclusions

A new push to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls could start with a campaign to promote women, concentrating on all areas of women’s life and beginning with the universal recognition of the dignity of women. Following the recognition of women, education methods that ensure communication and conflict resolution are needed to achieve non-violent relationships and peace and to prevent abusive behaviours. Lastly, Governments should implement policies that empower women at the different stages of their lives, and they should punish those who use any form of violence against women and girls.

Note: The statement is endorsed by Women’s Board Educational Cooperation Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Council.