

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

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The mission of the Earth Charter Initiative is to promote the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy, and a culture of peace.



INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY

Celebrating 100 Years!

**“Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities:
Progress for All”**

(IWD 2011 Theme)

International Women’s Day (8 March) is an occasion marked by women’s groups around the world. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday.



When women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, come together to celebrate their Day, they can look back to a tradition that represents decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development.

International Women’s Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history; it is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on an equal footing with men.



THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to the global mission of the United Nations to achieve equal rights and dignity for all...But equality for women and girls is also an economic and social imperative. Until women and girls are liberated from poverty and injustice, all our goals —peace, security, sustainable development — stand in jeopardy.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

Few causes promoted by the United Nations have generated more intense and widespread support than the campaign to promote and protect the equal rights of women. The Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right. Since then, the Organization has helped create a historic legacy of internationally agreed strategies, standards, and goals to advance the status of women worldwide.

Today a central organizing principle of the work of the United Nations is that no enduring solution to society's most threatening social, economic and political problems can be found without the full participation, and the full empowerment, of the world's women.

Although International Women's Day is held to celebrate women's achievements, it's also a time to understand and discuss the concerning issues that women still face.

It's a fact that . . .

- Over 70 percent of the world's poor are women and girls.
- Two thirds of the world's 774 million adults who are illiterate are women.
- 66% of the world's work is done by women, but only 10% of global income is earned by women and a mere 1% of global property is owned by women.
- The average global ratio for women in senior management positions remains as one woman for every nine men.
- Throughout the world over half a million women die each year from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth, an average of about one death every minute.
- Worldwide, women are more likely than men to have low-paid, low status and vulnerable jobs, with limited or no social protection or basic rights. They are also typically paid less; on average a woman's wages are 17% lower than those of a man and only 13 out of 500 CEOs of the largest companies in the world are female.
- Seventy five percent of the world's women are unable to receive bank loans because they have unpaid or insecure jobs: Receiving credit enables women to start a business which can improve their income levels and give them an opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty.

Sources: UN Women, United Nations Human Development Report 2010, The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics.

HELPING THE WORLD'S POOR HELP THEMSELVES THROUGH MICRO-FINANCE

Opportunities through Micro-finance have enabled women to break the cycle of poverty.

The good news is that we all have an opportunity to make a difference in this effort.

The following sites share stories from organizations that provide micro-finance as well as opportunities to support these efforts.

Your Lenten Sacrifice Can Make a Difference!

International Aid Services America www.gba.org
Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org/microfinance/stories
Millennium Goals: www.un.org/millenniumgoals



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How does this information relate to our commitment, and response to:

- ♦ Earth Charter
- ♦ Millennium Development Goals
- ♦ Human trafficking

2. How do we give hope to a World in Need?

3. Are there local needs or ministries in our own backyard that need our support and action to empower women and girls?



Incorporate this information and reflection questions in your prayer, personally, or with others.

We have identified the ISSUE, your task is the ACTION!

Prepared by the Peace and Justice Committee