

Poverty Facts:

- Explain how the “Poverty Facts” support Kofi Annan’s statement about women.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or printed text on the paper. A small dark speck is visible near the center of the page.

The World's Women, 2010

In 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women expressed the commitment "to advance the goals of equality, development, and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity." The World's Women 2010 offered a status report of conditions of women and men in the world. The report covers several broad areas: population and families, health, education, work, power and decision-making, violence against women, environment, and poverty. The main findings are summarized below.

General population patterns, families - Of the world's 7 billion people there are 57 million more men than women, mostly in the youngest age groups with the greatest differences being in India and China. After about age 50 there is a surplus of women due to their longer life expectancy. People, especially women, are marrying at older ages than in the past. In Europe, the average age at which women first marry is 30 or older. Older marriages have brought a decline in world fertility to 2.5 births per woman. However in countries where girls marry early, more than five children are common. Early marriages are also linked to lower levels of education and fewer job opportunities. Overall, caring for families falls mainly on women, who spend hours more per day working than men.

Health - In all regions women live longer than men, but other factors come into play. In developing nations poor pregnancy and childbirth care equalize life expectancies, as is the case in developed countries when women smoke or have other harmful health habits. Though on the whole fewer children are dying worldwide, Africa continues to have high rates of child mortality. Recent data also shows that in sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East, women account for more than half of people living with HIV/AIDS. The toll of the disease extends to the families that depend on them; as many children are left orphans.

Education - Women account for 2/3 of the world's 774 million adult illiterates, but in almost all countries literacy rates for the young are higher than those for adults. Enrollment of girls and boys is increasing across the world in elementary grades, but 72 million children, 54% of them girls, still do not attend school, and progress in secondary schooling lags behind primary, or elementary, education.

Work - Globally, women make up around 52% of those working, but far lower in many places. Women make up less than 30% of Northern African and Western Asian workers; under 40% in Southern Asia; and below 50% in the Caribbean and Central America. At least 3/4 of women's jobs in most of the more developed regions are in services; more than 1/2 in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding Southern Africa) and Southern Asia still farm. There are still few female lawmakers, senior officials, and managers. Despite working more, women continue to bear most responsibility for caring for the home, children, and other household members, preparing meals and doing other housework. In all regions women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid household work. Women who work also have a double burden of paid work and family responsibilities; totaling longer work hours than men in all regions. Like adults, girls are more likely than boys to work in their own homes. In developing nations, girls as young as 5 care for children, cook, and clean. Girls work longer hours, whether in housework, employment, or both. School attendance declines more for girls due to work.

Power and decision-making - Globally, women lag in decision-making roles. Only 17% of lawmakers are women, and only 17% hold places as religious leaders. Only 7 of 150 elected Heads of State in the world are women, and only 11 of 192 Heads of Government are. Far fewer women than men serve on boards of directors of large companies, as the "glass ceiling" continues to hold them down. Of the 500 largest corporations in the world, only 13 are run by females.

Violence against women - Violence against women, physical, sexual, psychological, and economic, both within and outside the home is a global problem. Such abuse occurs in all countries and regions. Younger women are more at risk than older women, and that abuse impacts them throughout their whole lives. In many parts of the world, husbands' beating their wives is accepted practice. Burning food, going outside without permission, problems with children, or arguing with a husband can be grounds for beatings. In Africa and the Middle East, rape is a form of warfare. Soldiers rape women to exert control over people.

Environment - Poor infrastructure and housing in developing regions greatly affect women's work, health, and survival. More than ½ of rural households and about ¼ of urban homes in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to drinking water. Women must collect water, giving them less time to spend on other activities. In sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Southern and South-Eastern Asia women must also collect wood or other fuel and are more exposed to smoke from being near fires while cooking and working indoors. They are therefore more likely to develop respiratory disease and lung cancer. In addition, natural disasters such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami claimed more female than male lives, since many women live at home in villages as men go off to cities and mines to work.

Poverty - In many parts of the world women and girls are heavily burdened by poverty. Female-headed households are more likely to be poor. In Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in developed regions, single mothers with children have higher poverty rates than those of single fathers with children. Most countries in Africa and about ½ of Asia still restrict land and other types of property ownership. Even married women have no control over household spending, including spending their own cash earnings.

Availability of gender statistics - A positive trend is that most countries now produce gender statistics on population, school enrollment, employment, and government representation. In addition, statistics on child labor are now collected by more countries than in the past. Similarly, surveys on time use and violence against women are conducted in most developed and in some developing countries. At the same time the international community has worked to set up guidelines to gather information by gender. Despite progress, many countries still do not collect information about women, their living conditions, or violence against them. Gender statistics about disease, home-based workers, the worst forms of child and female slavery, the killing of infant girls, poverty, and female ownership of land are not kept in many countries. The U.N. goal of gathering gender information, it is hoped, can help to reverse some dangerous world trends.

* * * * ACTION PLAN * * *

REASONS women are key to addressing problems:

BRAINSTORM WAYS to help women as a means to development:

CHOOSE 2-3 IDEAS and explain how they could be put into effect anywhere, locally to globally: