Find out why the impact of the water and sanitation crisis falls on the shoulders of women and girls

Secretary Hillary Clinton reflects on women, peace and security

Encouraging education. Today’s girls are tomorrow’s leaders.
Empowering women and girls around the world
to take part in global decision-making is the first step toward realizing a new standard of human and global development.

A new standard in international development

Investing in women has become a universal imperative, now recognized as the new standard in international development. The concept of women’s empowerment, equity, democratic transitions and move- ment toward achieving global peace, new social and political stability and greater prosperity for women, and men, around the world. When we want to explain why empowering girls and women is critical to fighting poverty, it often tells one person’s story. It’s easier to relate to a personal story than it is to a global data-telling us that the majority of the billion people who live below the poverty line are women and girls. We are often told never to treat a person like a statistic.

The faces behind the statistics

Rina Begum is a real person—but she’s also a statistic. When CARE met her, Rina and other women in her remote village in Bangladesh lived under virtual house arrest. Local tradition forbade women from leaving home without male escorts. Women who dared to do so were subjected to violence. Under this condition, women and girls were taller than those of women who could not go out in public, are denied access health care. Furthermore, in too many places such rules often go hand-in-hand with forced child marriage. The women in Rina’s group confronted the men in the village about the harsh treatment and women until it eventually ceased. They stopped four child marriages with police assistance. And, most notice- ably, women and girls began walking to school. With restricted movement, women are less likely to earn income and lose the access to health care. Furthermore, in too many places such rules often go hand-in-hand with forced child marriage.

The early marriage in Bangladesh is illegal under the Bangladesh Women's Rights Law of 1991. However, many girls are married against their will, often before reaching the age of 14. This practice, known as child marriage, is deeply rooted in cultural and religious beliefs. It not only denies young women the right to make decisions about their lives but also exposes them to the risks of early pregnancy and child borne complications.

Poverty-fighting organizations have known for decades that empowering girls and women yields benefits for entire families and communities, but there was clear evidence. This was empowerment that you could measure with a yardstick.

Women leaders create opportunity, experience, wisdom and power. Across all cultures and generations, women leaders have a unique capacity to share—share tal- ent, experience, wisdom and power. Whole communities are sustained by this act of sharing—our future depends upon it. Advancing women’s empowerment is about much more than women—women empowerment, whole societal progression. These are the most effective means by which we all, men, women and children, can realize lasting peace, prosperity and progress. If we want to reverse economic crisis, global epidemics, and extreme volatility, we need these leaders working on the front lines of change, free from economic impediments, cultural persecution, and other restrictions.

In 15 years of training and mentor- ing international women leaders, I have seen that women’s leadership redefines the concept of power—women and power to empower—Therl lead their families, for the businesses, governments, and civil societies they seek to improve for future generations. Across all cultures and generations, women leaders have a unique capacity to share—share tal- ent, experience, wisdom and power. Whole communities are sustained by this act of sharing—our future depends on it. Advancing women’s empowerment is about much more than women—women empowerment, whole societal progression. These are the most effective means by which we all, men, women and children, can realize lasting peace, prosperity and progress. If we want to reverse economic crisis, global epidemics, and extreme volatility, we need these leaders working on the front lines of change, free from economic impediments, cultural persecution, and other restrictions. It’s never been clearer—women are the solution. If we are to face this extreme potential as agents of change, we can accelerate progress in every sphere.

**New change agents are on the move**: mothers and their children, which challenges traditional approaches to poverty alleviation. In Bangladesh, where women and girls live under virtual house arrest, local traditions forbid women or girls from leaving home without a male escort. Therefore, women have been subjected to violence and denied access to health care. Furthermore, in too many places such rules often go hand-in-hand with forced child marriage.

The women in Rina’s group confronted the men in the village about the harsh treatment and women until it eventually ceased. They stopped four child marriages with police assistance. And, most notice- ably, women and girls began walking to school. With restricted movement, women are less likely to earn income and lose the access to health care. Furthermore, in too many places such rules often go hand-in-hand with forced child marriage. The program combined direct nutrition- focused interventions such as child feeding with indirect interventions that attack at the roots of the prob- lem—most notably the deep inequali- ties between women and men.

Rina lives in one of new villages and urban slums where groups of 20 women and 10 adolescent girls gathered regularly to discuss how to face the barriers holding them back. The groups discussed the lack of decision-making power, violence against women, barriers to education, and early marriage. They received literacy training, and learned basic life skills.

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TOGETHER, GENERAL MILLS AND MERCK ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We invite you to join us
In 2009, General Mills partnered with CARE to develop Join My Village, an innovative on-line initiative that invites individuals to inspire charitable contributions to help educate and empower women and girls in Malawi with the simple click of a mouse. Since then...

Click to commit
Join My Village followers released $350,000 in donations to help fund over 150 secondary scholarships, build 9 female teachers' homes, and enroll over 1,800 women in Village Savings and Loan Associations.

Merck joins us
In 2011, General Mills welcomed Merck to Join My Village, more than doubling its impact in Malawi, donating $900,000 and laying the groundwork for 2012.

Our village is growing!
Join My Village now helps girls and women in India and Malawi. We hope to donate up to $1.5 million in 2012.

Join us today
We’re inviting you to join General Mills, MERCK, and CARE in Join My Village 2012, and help more girls and women reach their full potential!
If your organization is interested in becoming a sponsor, contact us at info@joinmyvillage.com or learn more at joinmyvillage.com.
In the age of smart tablets, smart people are using technology to save lives and improve health.

Every year, 56,000 women in the developing world die giving birth. Sometimes, a woman survives childbirth, only to experience long-term complications or watch her child die. Yet, 11 million young children die due to infection, malnutrition, or war.

In the age of smart tablets, the innovative use of solar power, mobile networks and low-cost motorcycle ambulance transportation has been game-changing.

Harnessing the power of participatory development

Jacqueline Cuts, Executive Director of Safe Mothers Safe Babies (SAFE), based in rural Uganda, says, “There is no more ironic moment than giving birth and holding your baby for the first time.”

SAFE’s mission is to make that moment a joyous occasion by strengthening medical infrastructure, preventing problems before they start and increasing demand for mother-child health interventions. She says, “For a project to be sustainable, it has to be conceived or adopted by people in the community.”

Collaboration drives innovation forward. Patricia Michael, Executive Director of mHealth Alliance in Washington, D.C., says, “Key stakeholders, including NGOs, academic specialists and private companies, need to be engaged from the outset.”

In 2009, mHealth convened a week-long multi-stakeholder meeting that kickstarted numerous innovations. One mHealth initiative, Mobile Technology for Community Health (mOTECH), in Ghana hooks pregnant women into a mobile messaging network. They receive reminders to come up-to-date on their health, receive updates reminders regarding prenatal nutrition, and have a safe childbirth and know where to go if complications arise.

The important lessons from this one-week meeting were:

1. “Collaboration drives innovation forward. Let’s work together to identify how to do this better and more effectively.”
2. “Collaboration is key to making significant improvements. Solutions happen when communities, businesses and organizations come together to support each other, for example, while leveraging each other’s skills.”

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund, malnutrition causes more than a third of all childhood deaths around the globe.

“Nutrition is a hard thing to fix, because a lot of it is controlled by ‘household behaviors,’” says the Children’s Mary Shellen Poweles. “Then if you increase the amount of food in a society, it’s great enough. You need people who are able to understand how to fix that to benefit their kids.”

Poweles chairs the Frontline Health Workers Coalition, a new partnership of 15 major international health organizations calling for increased investment in frontline health workers for global health, including childhood nutrition. These workers can only assist with healthy breastfeeding habits, but also coach mothers on proper foods and timing for weaning, as well as locally available foods that add nutrition for development.

Concern for calories and culture

Many preventable nutrition issues faced by frontline health workers still involve cultural differences. The practice of “eating down” or reducing caloric intake to a baby’s size for delivery still occurs in parts of Southern Asia. Other societies forbid pregnant women from eating certain foods such as eggs—a high source of prenatal protein.

“It can’t be there as a western woman and say, ‘don’t do this,’” Poweles said. “You have to have local people figure out how to alter that behavior.”

Poweles and other frontline health workers provide the best solutions for identifying those who practice safer, culturally appropriate ways. Poweles called those women their “counter deviants, who often hold keys to transforming nutritional habits.”

“One of the real values of these frontline health workers is that the majority of them are drawn from the community that they’re going to serve,” Poweles said. “They go for training, but they go back to the community that they were raised in so they know local practices, locally available foods, taboos and traditions.”

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Global house calls for better nutrition

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How change agents are innovating on behalf of mothers and their children

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Giving birth to her child should be one of the happiest moments in her life...

...if she survives it.

FACT: Every 90 seconds, a woman dies from complications of pregnancy or childbirth in the developing world.

By the time you finish reading this page, it will have happened again.

That is why EngenderHealth is leading the way in 20 countries, including the U.S., to increase access to family planning and to make pregnancy safer for women. We train health care professionals and partner with governments and communities to help women and families get the quality reproductive health care they need to realize a better life.

Your support can help make motherhood safer around the world. Go to EngenderHealth.org to learn more, and follow us online:

facebook.com/engenderhealth
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A girl's dream for Rwanda

This land of a thousand hills, Rwanda is known for its hills, rolling landscapes. These hills are the country's source of pride and inspiration. For girls, they represent the limits of their universe. "Connect- ing girls, inspiring futures," this year's International Women's Day theme, is very real for me and for Rwanda, where many girls have never ventured beyond the next valley.

As a small girl, I dreamed about a future of opportunity and education. Girls who give birth before the age of 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their twenties. Pregnancy is the leading cause of death for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 in developing countries. When a girl in the developing world stays in school for seven or more years, she'll marry later and have fewer, healthier children. Though Rosematrie found herself in consistent trouble for taking too much time in class, she is also never late for school. She sits in the front row of her 6th grade classroom and received an award for perfect attendance out of her 60 peers.

Rosematrie attends a Catholic school called the National Girls School of Jacmel, on the southeastern coast of Haiti. A local charity pays for her tuition, but Rosematrie fears that the sponsorship may not extend to secondary school. In Haiti, the present nation in the Western Hemisphere, where 60 percent of schools are private, tuition fees prohibit 40 percent of children from attending primary school, and fewer still can afford the more expensive secondary-school education.

A chalkboard made of sheet metal hangs on the plased outer wall of a ramshackle home in Jacmel, Haiti. Next to it stands Rosematrie François, a small girl of 12 whom she showed in this study-type, full of pride.

We are often preoccupied when we consider the plight of a girl in one part of the world—especially a girl who has a hard time understanding how a girl from another part of the world might feel. It is not as easy to imagine Rosematrie living in a world where HIV infection rates among children are a daily worry that may not only affect her, but the tools and information she needs to continue her education.

Connections—friends, information, peers, mentors, or teachers—are as important to girls in Rwanda as food and water. Increasing connections among girls not only equips them with the tools and information they need, but also makes girls feel empowered and strong in the face of the many challenges that life throws at them.

For girls, they represent the tools and information they need— it makes girls feel empowered and strong in the face of the many challenges that life throws at them. For Rosematrie webdriver, she couldn't practice her lessons. It's a small sacrifice for a bigger dream of a better future.

Erasing the Fine Print

Erase

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Invest in a girl today.

Plan

Because I am a Girl

There are nearly 60 million child brides worldwide. Some as young as 12.
A better world for women and girls is a better world for ALL.

That is why together, we continue to develop ways to harness the growing financial power, influence and voices of women.

We invite you to join us in advancing and increasing philanthropic support for women and girls.

Learn more at www.womensfundingnetwork.org
Breaking the cycle of disempowerment

The impact of the water and sanitation crisis is far greater on women than men. It impacts women’s lives in numerous ways and touches on many different parts of daily life.

Without safe water close to home, millions of women spend hours each day walking for water. It is also the mothers who usually care for children sick with water-related diseases, who suffer as 1,000 of their children die each day due to diarrheal diseases.

In developing countries, women’s voices often go unheard. Water and sanitation aren’t given the political priority they deserve. A vicious circle perpetuates women’s lower socio-economic status as women and girls living without water and sanitation have little time for productive work or education, and often are willing candidates to train as handpump caretakers and hygiene promoters.

Close to home
Lisa Schleicher from WaterAid explained: “Women have the greatest incentive to keep projects functioning, as involving women enhances the sustainability of water and sanitation programs. It also helps women develop skills they can apply to other areas of development and empowerment.”

Providing safe drinking water and sanitation close to home is a gift of time for millions of women and girls—time that can be used for productive work or education and help entire communities take steps out of poverty.

To learn more, visit www.hiltonfoundation.org/prize and help us solve this challenge.

Thirsty?

Water-related diseases are the biggest killers of children in Africa. WaterAid’s programs save lives, put children back in school and free women from hours of water collection each day.

Give water, give life, give $25 today.

WaterAid, 35 Madison Avenue, Suite 2301, New York, NY 10017.
Women and girls around the world

Empowerment through access to safe drinking water and sanitation

Millions of women and girls in Africa, Asia, and Latin America spend an average of three hours each day in order to collect often unsafe and unclean drinking water for their families. This daily commute means losing 40 lbs, on average, of the average weight of a fourth grader, over rough terrain that limits their safety and health. Even in 2012, these women and girls are still being used as water and wastewater infrastructure around the world.

This challenge is entirely solvable, and is being solved by women and their communities across the globe. A vital step in the free women from being used as infrastructure, by empowering them to plan and implement safe drinking water and sanitation programs for their homes and communities.

Women and young girls spend much of their time collecting and transporting water for their families—often over 6 kilometers daily—and finding adequate sanitation. Collecting water not only consumes up to 26 percent of a woman or young girl’s time, it also subjects them to adverse health effects from carrying 40 pound water containers on their heads, hips or backs.

Carrying water containers

Carrying 40 pound water containers on their heads, hips or backs can cause back pain and joint pain, and in extreme cases, permanent deformities that cause complications in childbirth. Women of African, Asian, or Latin American descent must walk long distances carrying heavy water containers, and will live with illnesses caused by contaminated water. Since young women understand the burden of not having access to safe drinking water and sanitation, they are essential to its solving. Several studies have shown that when women are part of the design and implementation of safe drinking water and sanitation programs, they are 88 percent more effective than programs that do not include women.

Why is the water crisis such an important issue for women and girls in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Women in Sub-Saharan Africa are disproportionately affected by a lack of access to clean water. These women face adolescence and childhood diseases, pregnancy and childbirth, and the weight of water. Adding an even further burden, in much of Africa it is considered customary a woman's job to carry water. Many girls suffer developmental disabilities from carrying heavy loads at an extremely young age.

Girls must often leave school to help their mothers carry water when their families grow too large. If they are lucky enough to stay in school, they’ll likely drop out at puberty because they don’t have hygienic facilities at school. Then, because a teenage girl is not in school, the cycle starts again. She will likely marry young, she will walk those long distances carrying heavy containers of water throughout her pregnancy, hope to survive childbirth... and so it goes on. Therefore, investing in clean water is a way of investing in the futures of women and girls.

Women and young girls suffer the greatest burden of this global crisis, as burdens they bear and injuries they sustain are often the most severe. Worldwide, women and girls suffer 88 percent more severe injuries, and carry 30 percent more burdens, than when women are part of the design and implementation of safe drinking water and sanitation programs, they are 88 percent more effective than programs that do not include women.

World Water Day

This World Water Day—March 22, 2012—organizations have come together to raise awareness of the fact that we know how to solve this challenge, and it is being solved. Though World Water Day is officially recognized as one day a year, we are all committed to “making every day World Water Day.”

You can help bring this challenge and its solutions further into the national discourse by becoming an advocate: write your Member of Congress, make a contribution to a worthy nonprofit; tell your friends, family, civic clubs and faith communities about the issue; involve your faith leaders; and help us solve the challenge.

Empowering women through access to safe drinking water and sanitation

Empowering women through access to safe drinking water and sanitation programs for their homes and communities.

Bearing the burden

Almost one billion people remain without safe drinking water. Women and young girls suffer the greatest burdens of this global crisis, which limits their ability to get an education and participate in income-generating activities. The odds are stacked against any young African, Asian, or Latin American girl living past the age of five if she has limited access to clean drinking water and sanitation. As she gets older, she will face the burden of hauling heavy water containers for miles and living with illnesses caused by contaminated water.

Women and young girls understand the burden of not having access to

Water and sanitation programs for their homes and communities.

Thanks to empowerment around the world, we can solve this challenge. We have joined forces to call on governments, faith leaders, and the international community to provide clean water and sanitation to girls and women, for their families, and for their communities. Several studies have shown that when women are part of the design and implementation of safe drinking water and sanitation programs, they are 88 percent more effective than programs that do not include women.

Including women in the planning and implementation of safe drinking water and sanitation programs is essential to their solution. When women are part of the design and implementation of safe drinking water and sanitation programs, they are 88 percent more effective than programs that do not include women.

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From your experience, what is the biggest misconception about Saudi women among the rest of the world?

There have been many misconceptions about Saudi women. They are often perceived as second-class citizens who are miseducated, oppressed and dependent. Media has not only perpetuated these negative stereotypes, but has also played a role in its own image and role. Therefore, it becomes important to challenge these misconceptions. The truth about Saudi women is that they are impressive, they have achieved a great deal over the past decade. Women now constitute the majority of students in higher education and now take the lead in the workforce in many fields that were once male dominated. They are exceedingly active in medicine, teaching, nursing, banking, media, commerce, real estate, as well as in marketing. The recent decision by King Abdullah allowing women to run and vote in municipal elections and to become members of the Shura Council, an advisory council to the king, has huge implications for the status of women in Saudi Arabia in terms of political empowerment. A great example of where Saudi women are heading is, Majdah Abu Rass, the first Arab woman and Palestinian, female to run in municipal elections.

What is the biggest fear faced by women and girls in Saudi Arabia right now? What can readers do to get involved and help alleviate those fears?

Right now, women in Saudi Arabia are facing the fear of being condemned and ostracized by their families and communities. They fear losing their family and social support systems, as well as losing their freedom and opportunities. They fear being confined to their homes and being subject to violence. Therefore, it is important to educate and empower women to challenge these misconceptions and misconceptions about their capabilities and rights. This can be done through raising awareness, providing support and resources, and advocating for change.

We picked her up in our car as she stood on the side of the dirt road leading into Cyriana. A quiet, unassuming, woman in a bright, colorful dress.

I wasn’t quite sure of who she was or her role in the community. We were about to visit, but she knew she was leading us into the village to see how new rain water tanks had transformed the health of those in the northern Yemeni community. They told the group talked about the impact that Blandine had in bringing them together, educating them on hygiene and sanitation, encouraging them in exploring what needs they could meet as they worked together. 1 quickly realized that this quiet woman was far from quiet. She was the catalyst in the community. She was bringing people together, she was a leader. As I listened to the stories of those she influenced, I was curious about her own story.

Blandine was married and a mother to five children—three boys and two girls—and spent per time teaching in the local primary school for 15 years. However, after the genocide, she stepped teaching, and dedicated her time to the community—she began to bring neighbors and friends together to restore and heal the division and pain caused by the genocide. That was when the water tank of water came up: either collected water at the lake at the bottom of the mountain or a stream at the top of the mountain—both options were far away and treacherously steep. Some people look at their circumstances, and wonder who is going to help them. Others realize that there is someone who is, and that they begin to make a difference—starting in their own neighbor- hood. That someone is Blandine. And she is a hero in the hearts of her friends, family and neighbors and to mine, too.

The private sector is uniquely positioned to deliver a better life for women and children around the world.

"I haven't seen any government that's leading ending violence against women," Ilse Stommel, founder of Karama, a network of Arab region groups working to end violence against women and promote female political participa- tion, said. "It’s always the women’s groups of the society that really speak to the heart of people. It’s easy for women’s groups to talk to other women’s groups and talk to women’s groups.

Financial concerns, fulfillment challenges

With many Western governments grappling with financial anxieties, many fear momentum on women’s issues could be threatened without bringing in greater involvement among partners.

With the U.N. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—ranging from halting extreme poverty to reducing maternal mortality by three-quarters—running closer to the 2015 target date, leaders know achievement can’t rest slowly on short-term, quick wins.

“If we are to reach our goals of increased access to reproductive health, now is the time to innovate, to use all the resources, ideas and pictures at our disposal,” Calvin said. “We cannot allow austerity to drive our actions, to solve problems of global poverty.”
Partners against sexual violence

Sexual violence is a global human rights violation. Together for Girls represents the first global effort to correct this destructive social pattern. Ten international organizations from the public, private and nonprofit sectors – including five UN agencies led by UNICEF, the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, BD and other partners – are working to mitigate the devastating health and human consequences of gender-based violence.

Together for Girls addresses the systemic and societal foundations of sexual violence against children by supporting governments and civil society to implement national surveys, mobilize prevention and protection programs and change social norms through broad-based advocacy.

Research indicates that sexual violence against girls is a direct and indirect driver of HIV/AIDS spread and other adverse health and social consequences. Fortunately, positive actions are being taken. Legal and policy reforms and improved services for children who experience sexual violence support the ultimate goal to end this global outrage.

Named one of the World’s Most Admired Companies, and one of the Wealthy, Most Ethical Companies, BD is dedicated to serving the global community’s most important health needs.

BD – Helping all people live healthy lives.
Women are emerging as role models in science and math, forging a path for the next generation of girls.

At elementary school science fairs, it’s not unusual to see girls proudly displaying their posters and confidently explaining scientific theories. However, according to a report, “Why to Fear?” published by the American Association of University Women, only about 20% of educational programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have women as professors.

The big drop-off

On average, high school girls have a slightly higher grade point aver-
gage than boys. But by the first year of college, there is a shift, with 24.2% of men planning to major in STEM fields, compared with only 11.4% of women.

Joan Heirbers, Immediate Past President, Association for Women in Science, says, “The pipeline gets increasingly leaky as one pro-
gresses through the educational and employment sectors. The experi-
ence of young men and women in college and graduate school differs, with the result that women become increasingly less committed to careers in STEM disciplines.”

The main challenges for girls are negative stereotypes, lower spa-
tial skills ability and lack against females in STEM fields. Practi-
ical tips from the AAUW include addressing negative stereotypes outright, doing spatial skills train-
ning and taking calculus in high school. Girls who take calculus are three times more likely to major in a science-related field.

Women emerging as STEM role models

There are female role models excelling in STEM fields. A great example is Dr. Bonnie Bassler, Pro-
fessor, Princeton University, this year’s North American recipient of the L’Oreal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science. Dr. Bassler won her Ph.D. in molecular biology from Johns Hopkins University, remembers what her mother said when she was young. “Yes, Ben-
nie, you can be anything you want to be.”

Dr. Bassler says she listened and never looked back.

A path forward for girls

According to Dr. Bassler, things are changing for the better for girls and women. She says, “Sci-
ence, math, and engineering departments are filled with diverse people. That is an instant help to making traditionally male-dominated fields seem accessible to women. The top-
ics are relevant to society. These students will be the people who solve the world’s most pressing problems: food, energy, environment, health.”

Dr. Bassler has increased her students’ confidence in engaging in exciting experiments. Many of her students are quite open about their work having an impact on the health and well-
being of a household—such as replacing a mud floor with a cement one.

Financial lives of the poor are complicated, even while providing resources, needs, emergency expenses, and school fees, with an unpre-
dictable income, they manage to save 10 to 15 percent of that income. Sometimes the only way to do this is to save informally in unreli-
able ways: under a mattress or by buying livestock because they don’t have access to sav-
ings accounts. Women are in a safe, confidential place to save and they must be able to protect these assets and retain control of them in their own names.

There are 8-10 million women entrepreneurs in the developing world.

Women’s economic security won’t happen without a skilled and passionate champion. By creating comprehensive financial opportunities we equip women with the tools to imagine, plan for, and own their futures.
Pr. Bonnie Bassler

USA, Microbiologist.
2012 Laureate for North America.
For understanding chemical communication between bacteria and opening new doors for treating infections.

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Promising women’s financial freedom

Almost three billion adults worldwide are unbanked or under-banked—and most are women. Without access to resources to attend school or grow a business, their potential and dreams are far too often wasted. This affects us all.

As U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said just a few months ago, “A rising tide of women in the developing world—over 65 percent are women. Women produce half the world’s food, but own only one percent of the world’s farmland. When you invest in her future, the story changes. Opportunities for financial independence have ripple effects that spread far beyond each individual woman.

Research shows that when a woman is able to contribute to her family’s income, the majority of her earnings go toward creating a better future for herself and her children.

Just one additional year of education for a girl yields a 20 percent increase in her future earning potential.

A child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent more likely to survive past the age of five.

There are 876 million illiterate adults in the developing world—over 65 percent are women.

For a limited time, help fund another woman’s big break, for free.

Jerilyn remembers hers.

With an $825 loan through Kiva, Jerilyn was able to take control of her own destiny, grow her fishing business in the Philippines, and three years later, she makes enough to send her children to school full-time.

Imagine a day when no woman is too remote to tell her story to an online global community of people who want to participate in her success as she lifts her family, her community and her nation out of poverty. That day is within reach.

The participation age

As we embark on this second century of International Women’s Day, new technologies are ushering in what Clinton calls a “Participation Age,” in which every individual, regardless of gender or location, is poised to become a contributing and valued member of their economy. Rapid expansion of Internet access and the growth of mobile banking are empowering more women entrepreneurs, even in the world’s most remote villages, to connect with a global network of lenders.

The promise of women’s financial freedom to transform lives and economies is not just in the hands of governments and humanitarian organizations, it is also in the hands of everyday people like you and me. Through organizations like Kiva, anyone can help jumpstart a brighter future for a woman entrepreneur by making a $25 loan. And it’s a loan that starts a ripple effect of change. You lend, she grows her business and repays, and you can lend the money to another deserving woman entrepreneur around the world. This is how sustainable change gets started.

Through our collective actions, we can change the lives of millions of women and ensure that the Participation Age truly shines in every corner of the globe.

JENNIFER WEITZENGA
editorial@mediaplanet.com

8 FACTS

1. Over 1 billion people live in extreme poverty—85 percent are women and girls.
2. Seventy-six million primary school-age children are not in school—95 percent are girls.
3. There are 876 million illiterate adults in the developing world—over 65 percent are women.
4. Women produce half the world’s food, but own only one percent of the world’s farmland.
5. When you invest in her future, the story changes. Opportunities for financial independence have ripple effects that spread far beyond each individual woman.
6. Research shows that when a woman is able to contribute to her family’s income, the majority of her earnings go toward creating a better future for herself and her children.
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HELP THE VOSS FOUNDATION BUILD WELLS AND CHANGE LIVES.

The 21st century will largely be defined by the global economic recovery and the ability to achieve sustainable peace. It is clear that gender equality is integral to both global economic growth and world peace. Women and girls are the face of complex social problems, and especially suffer disproportionally during war and economic crises. Solutions are often found where problems are experienced, as women and girls are often the solution builders. Examples abound demonstrating the power of women’s voices, perspectives, and leadership to bring about significant social transformation.

We can claim progress when every woman who wants to is able to access contraception, and receive skilled care during pregnancy and childbirth. These are goals that can be achieved in our lifetime, and we are seeing incredible strides in places as diverse as Tanzania and Bangladesh. Pathfinder International has delivered vital sexual reproductive health programs that expand opportunities for women, men, and especially suffer disproportionately during war and economic crises. Solutions are often found where problems are experienced, as women and girls are often the solution builders. Examples abound demonstrating the power of women’s voices, perspectives, and leadership to bring about significant social transformation.

As an easy and engaging way to spread the message and support organizations that work towards eliminating gender discrimination and empowering girls to take charge of their own lives, Invest in a girl and she will change the world. Believe it and act.

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An easy and engaging way to empower girls and women in India and Malawi is by taking simple online actions and engaging online with incredible programs that help girls receive the education they deserve, and help women start businesses and have healthy pregnancies and deliveries. We all make choices every day, and would like to encourage people choose to learn more about the lives of girls in developing countries, the impact of programs to improve their access to basic things like education and healthcare, and then decide to do something about it. Talk to family and friends to spread the message and support organizations that work towards eliminating gender discrimination and empowering girls to take charge of their own lives. Invest in a girl and she will change the world. Believe it and act.

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EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO WORK TOGETHER AGAINST THE HIV/AIDS & WATER CRISSES IN AFRICA.