



WHEC Update

Briefing of worldwide activity of the Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC)

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Shaping the Future

Our September 2019 edition of *WHEC Update* focuses on the plight of widows especially in India and other developing countries, who have very limited and no rights in these societies. Once widowed, women in many countries often confront a denial of inheritance and land rights, degrading and life-threatening mourning and burial rites and other forms of widow-abuse. We know child-widows and elderly-widows face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, based on their gender, age, rural location and disability. Even in countries where legal protection is more inclusive, widows can suffer social marginalization. Lack of awareness and discrimination by judicial officials can cause widows to avoid turning to the justice system to seek justice and damages.

The United Nations General Assembly declared 23 June as **International Widows' Day** <https://undocs.org/A/RES/65/189> to focus on the plight of this forgotten segment of the communities. In a message in 2011, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon observed that "this first International Widows' Day is an occasion to call attention to many "firsts" that women must face when their husbands die." In addition to coping with grief, they may find themselves for the first time since marriage without any social safety net. Far too often, widows lack access to inheritance, land tenure, employment and even the means to survive. In places, such as India and other developing countries, where a widow's status is linked to her husband, she may find herself suddenly shunned and isolated.

Of the approximately 258 million widows on our world today, more than 120 million live in extreme poverty. In countries embroiled in conflicts, women are often widowed young must bear heavy burden of caring for their children amid fighting and displacement with no help or support. Some of these widows are teenagers – or even younger. The deaths of their husbands can leave a terrible legacy these widows must endure throughout their remaining years. We all know the horrific stories of child-widows and elderly-widows sold in sex-slave-markets, thrown out of the house and are often forced to live wretched lives. Suffering in isolation and obscurity, these widows share the life of no emotional support, hope nor any future-earnings.

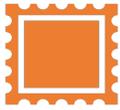
The time has come to make a difference – creating opportunities for widows can also help to protect their children and avoid the cycle of intergenerational poverty and deprivation. Addressing the plight of widows is central to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and social and economic justice for girls and women. Despite many obstacles' widows face today, many make valuable contributions to their countries and communities, such as, taking in orphans, serving as caregivers, and reaching across lines of conflict to mend tears in the social fabric. As we work to develop, and to sustain, of this precious fabric, we are blessed to have the potential of this vast and undimmed resource at our side.

Towards progress for widows, the Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) proposes empowering widows through access to adequate healthcare, education, decent work, full participation in decision-making and public life, and live free of violence and abuse. We should work to give them a chance to build a secure life after bereavement.

Our advocacy programs for SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10 and 17 focus on empowerment of girls and women. WHEC's focus, since its inception in 2001, has been not only on developing meaningful ways of improving the lives of those who suffer social injustice and discrimination, but also on engaging governments, NGOs, industry and the society-at-large. Join us to shape the future of this forgotten segment of population.

Widows: Invisible Women, Invisible Problems

Rita Luthra, MD



Your Questions, Our Reply

What it means to be a widow in India and other developing countries today? How can we join Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) and/or United Nations (UN) to improve the lives of widows?

A Matter of Human Rights and Social Justice: Public policy has largely ignored specific problems of widows in India. And given their numbers, this exclusion can prove costly for society in general. In India, the gender dimensions are much stronger than in most other countries – and they affect many more women. There are at least 55 million widows in India, probably more. That is around the same as the entire population of countries like South Africa and Tanzania, more than all the people in South Korea or Myanmar.

Overall, public policy has largely ignored the specific problems of widows in India. But given the numbers involved, this exclusion is likely to prove costly not just for the women concerned but for society in general.

Marking the first International Widows' Day on 23 June 2011, widows, advocates from civil society, diplomats, UN officials, NGOs and other dignitaries convened at the United Nations for a conference to raise awareness for the plight of widows worldwide and more than 500 million of their children around the world. This rare designation of an international day of recognition by the United Nations follows independent verification of shocking levels of violence and deprivation faced by hundreds of millions of widows worldwide. Let us plan and develop future projects/program to improve the lives of widows. How can various projects/programs and communities have incorporated this valuable resource to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC), *NGO in Special Consultative Status with Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*, wishes to focus attention to the plight of this segment of children and women with other NGOs associated with UN DPI and ECOSOC.

WHEC Initiatives' Focus

1. Initial steps for poverty alleviation; 80% of widows live in conditions of abject poverty and degradation.
2. Elimination of violence against widows; this segment of population encounter many forms of violence – both physical and sexual violence.
3. Legislate antidiscrimination laws against widows;
4. Advocating widow's rights globally;
5. Planning and developing education & health programs with UNICEF, UN Woman and WHO for empowerment and employment of widows;
6. A case for UN Member States intervention: In the past few years, India's role as a growing economic power has been recognized. However, India still surpasses other developing nations in the absolute number of persons suffering from chronic hunger, malnutrition and social injustice. Governments should act to uphold their commitments to ensure the rights of widows as enshrined in international law.

Poverty is sexist.

It's time to start talking about the rights of **all** women. The poverty and gender inequality go hand-in-hand. Being born in a poor country and being born female amount to a double whammy for girl and women and more so for widows. They are significantly worse off than their counterparts in richer countries, and in every sphere, they are hit harder by poverty than men.



United Nations at a Glance

Permanent Mission of Honduras at the United Nations

Honduras became UN Member State on 17 December 1945



Honduras officially the **Republic of Honduras**, is a country in Central America. It has at times been referred to as Spanish Honduras to differentiate it from British Honduras, which became modern-day Belize. The republic of Honduras is bordered to the west by Guatemala, to the southwest by El Salvador, to the southeast by Nicaragua, to the south by the Pacific Ocean at the Gulf of Fonseca, and to the north by the Gulf of Honduras, a large inlet of the Caribbean Sea.

Capital and largest city: Tegucigalpa; Official language: Spanish; Ethnic groups: 90% Mestizo, 7% Amerindian, 2% Afro-Honduran, 1% White; Total area: 112,492 km² (43,433 sq. mi.); Population (2016 estimate) 9.2 million; Legislature: National Congress. Honduras is known for its rich natural resources, including minerals, coffee, tropical fruit, and sugar cane, as well as for its growing textiles industry, which serves the international market.

Map of Honduras



The World Bank categorizes Honduras as a low middle-income nation. The nation's per capita income sits around 600 US dollars making it one of the lowest in North America. In 2015, 50% of the population were still living below the poverty line. By 2016 more than 66% were living below the poverty line. estimates put unemployment at about 27.9%, which is more than 1.2 million Hondurans. Economic growth in the last few years has averaged 7% a year, one of the highest rates in Latin America. Despite this, Honduras has seen the least development amongst all Central American countries.

Honduras is ranked 130 of 188 countries with a Human Development Index of 0.625 that classifies the nation as having medium development (2015).

Poverty Reduction Strategies

Since the 1970s when Honduras was designated a "food priority country" by the UN, organizations such as The World Food Program (WFP) have worked to decrease malnutrition and food insecurity. Honduras' Poverty Reduction Strategy was implemented in 1999 and aimed to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015. Extreme poverty saw a low of 36.2% only two years after the implementation of the strategy but then increased to 66.5% by 2012.

The World Bank Group Executive Board approved a plan known as the new Country Partnership Framework (CPF). This plan's objectives are to expand social programs coverage, strengthen infrastructure, increase financing accessibility, strengthen regulatory framework and institutional capacity, improve the productivity of rural areas, strengthen natural disaster and climate change resiliency, and the buildup local governments so that violence and crime rates will decrease.

Details: <https://www.un.int/honduras/>

Collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO | Honduras



Primary Health Care for remote village communities in Honduras: A model for training and support of community health workers.

Honduras, a nation of about 7 million people, is one of the poorest countries in the Western hemisphere. A dependency ration of 79% demonstrates the small population segment contributing to economic development. Infant mortality, a key indicator of population health, remains about 10 times higher than in Western European countries (31 versus 2 to 4 per 1,000), though it has decreased significantly over the last 30 years.

Health worker training, evaluation, and support in this model are provided by US-based primary care professionals. The intervention is designed in five stages:

1. Background needs assessment based on patient chart reviews to identify prevalent health problems;
2. Selection of target communities;
3. Obtaining community involvement and prospective health worker commitment;
4. Development and implementation of a needs-specific curriculum for health worker training and community health education; and
5. Maintenance, evaluation, and expansion of training and support for community health workers.

The establishment of sustainable primary health care in remote, underserved communities using community health workers is possible and feasible, even in countries that do not have a national health worker network. Primary care professionals can play an instrumental role in project design, management, and supervision. In environments in which there are professional health workforce shortages, community health workers can provide valuable services for case management, preventive care, health education, and community mobilization, relieving an otherwise overloaded public health system.

Ongoing evaluation, supervision, in-service training, and guidance are essential to maintain a successful health worker program. Western NGOs and primary care professionals can play a meaningful role in supporting and sustaining such programs. We advocate this model as a potential basis of implementation in other communities in Honduras and beyond. The relatively low cost also makes it attractive as a supplemental health provision strategy for local, regional, and national health authorities.

Details: <https://www.who.int/countries/hnd/en/>



UN NGO/DPI Executive Committee Board

Ms. Upasana Chauhan, Main Representative of the Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) at the UN in New York, has been elected as the **Secretary of the UN NGO/DPI Executive Committee Board – 2019 – 2021**. NGO/DPI Executive Committee is liaison between the NGO community and the UN. It is comprised of 18 representatives elected by organizations officially associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI). The Executive Committee through its popular Communications Workshops and other activities throughout the year provides NGOs opportunities to become more knowledgeable about UN and NGO programs as well as how to make more effective use of their association with the UN DPI.

In partnership with the UN DPI, the Executive Committee organizes the annual UN DPI NGO Conference, at UN Headquarters or abroad, which increases public understanding of the United Nations critical efforts on issues of human rights, economic and social development, the environment, the rule of law and

peace-building. This event is an important opportunity for NGOs to network and promote the efforts of their organizations.

The Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) has been associated with UN DPI since 2003, and with the Economic and Social Council (ECSOC) since 2008. We all at WHEC have full support for Upasana and wish her the best.

Congratulations again Upasana! Good Luck!

http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/Upasana_Chauhan_Resume.pdf

WHEC's advocacy programs focus mainly on SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10 and 17. We look forward to achieving our mutual goals and strengthen the Global Partnership.

Join the efforts!

Details: <http://ngodpiexecom.org/>

Bulletin Board



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Continued.....

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To be continued.....



Collaboration with UN University (UNU)

UNU-WIDER (World Institute for Development Economics Research)

Expert Series on Health Economics

Minimum Wages, Globalization, and Poverty in Honduras

To be competitive in the global economy, some argue that Latin American countries need to reduce or eliminate labor market regulations such as minimum wage legislation because they constrain job creation and hence increase poverty. On the other hand, minimum wage increases can have a direct positive impact on family income and may therefore help to reduce poverty.

We take advantage of a complex minimum wage system in a poor country that has been exposed to the forces of globalization to test whether minimum wages are an effective poverty reduction tool in this environment.

The authors find the net effect of minimum wage increases in Honduras is the reduction of extreme poverty, with an elasticity of -0.18, and all poverty, with an elasticity of -0.10 (using the national poverty lines). These results are driven entirely by the effect on workers in large private sector firms, where minimum wage legislation is enforced.

Increases in the minimum do not affect the incidence of poverty among workers in sectors where minimum wages are not enforced (small firms) or do not apply (self-employed and public sector). Hence, the authors show that minimum wages can be used as a poverty reduction tool in the formal sector. However, the authors do not endorse minimum wages as the best tool as they have not carried out a complete cost-benefit analysis of this policy *vis-à-vis* others.

In conclusion, before one could endorse minimum wage policy as a poverty reduction tool, more evidence needs to be garnered with respect to the channels through which it operates in the household and in the firm as well as its costs (direct and indirect) and benefits relative to those of other interventions. For example, it is possible that the direct fiscal burden associated with minimum wages may be lower than other redistribution interventions (e.g. targeted social programs) and its benefits higher, if for example, employers do indeed invest in improving worker productivity. However, it is also possible that other instruments (e.g. transfers, education) yield more poverty reduction for the same unit of resources allocated to implementing and monitoring a minimum wage policy. Hence, further research is needed to properly address this difficult policy question.

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Sweden (Swedish International Development Corporation Agency – SIDA) and the United Kingdom (Department for International Development) to the Institute’s overall research program and activities.

Details of the paper can be accessed from the link of UNU-WIDER on CME Page
<http://www.WomensHealthSection.com/content/CME>



United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) *The Effort to Advance the Global Strategy (continued)*

Teach a girl, enrich the world



As the humanitarian crises in Africa, Latin America and Middle East continue to unfold, girls are once again caught in the cross-fire. Murdered by soldiers, killed or sexually assaulted as they flee, their lives are being ravaged by wars, social unrest they did not start. Once again, they are victims of somebody else’s dispute, subjected to sexual violence by those hoping to achieve their military and political goals.

How much more are we willing to stand?

Currently 28.5 million children in conflict-affected countries are out of school, more than half of them are girls. It is not just their security, but their education and hope for better life that are being ruined.

But these girls don’t need to be faceless, voiceless statistics. They can be victors. The key in investing in girls’ potential, something that can be a win-win for everyone – enabling female participation in local economies can accelerate the fight against poverty, inequality and gender disparity.

When you educate a girl, you educate a nation.

The question is, is anyone really listening to such calls? After all, we’ve been talking about giving girls equal access to education, employment and healthcare for the past three decades. Will the international community – government, business and the general public – finally take much needed action?

Educated girls and women have smaller families and healthier children, are less likely to die in childbirth, are more likely to see their children survive past the age of 5, are more likely to send their children to school, and are better able to protect themselves and their children from malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, trafficking, and sexual exploitation. Education empowers women, multiplying their economic choices and contributions, and increasing their potential voice and influence across the board.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been critical in galvanizing progress around gender equality and women’s empowerment, but we must build on this success. As the old adage goes, you can teach a man to fish to feed himself for a lifetime. But if you invest in a girl, she feeds herself, educates future children, lifts up her community and propels her nation forward – charging a path that offers dignity for all in the process.

The Women’s Health and Education Center’s (WHEC’s) Policy Advocacy Agenda

In order to maximize efforts which are the most needed and which will have the highest impact on girls’ education around the world, WHEC is focusing policy advocacy efforts on four key strategic priorities:

1. An enhanced focus on marginalized and excluded groups;
2. The reduction/elimination of school-related gender-based violence;
3. Improved learning outcomes for girls; and

4. An increased number of girls transitioning to secondary education and accessing post-primary opportunities.

Join the efforts and projects!

To be continued....

Two Articles of Highest Impact, August 2019

Editors' Choice – Journal Club Discussions

Fully open-access with no article-processing charges

Our friendship has no boundaries. We welcome your contributions.

1. Healthy Ageing: A Call for Global Action;
<http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/heal/heal026.php3>
WHEC Publications. Funding: WHEC Global Initiatives are funded by a grant from an anonymous donor. Join us at WHEC Global Health Line for discussion and contributions.
2. Urinary Tract Injury: Prevention & Management;
<http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/urog/urog020.php3>
WHEC Publications. Funding: WHEC Global Initiatives are funded by a grant from an anonymous donor. Join us at WHEC Global Health Line for discussion and contributions.



From Editor's Desk

New Initiatives, New Collaborations, New Directions

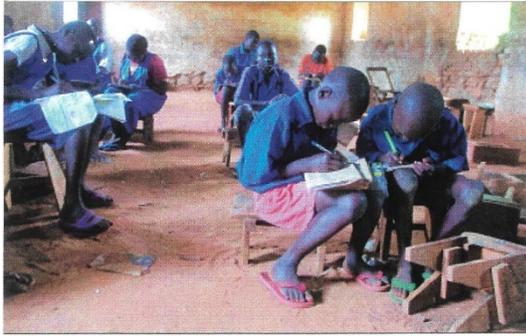


Poverty is sexist – Gender & Poverty

This initiative aims at pressuring leaders to put girls and women at the heart of key policies and decisions. Women are significantly worse off than their counterparts in richer countries, and in every sphere, they are hit harder by poverty than men. Investments targeted towards girls and women pay dividends in lifting everyone out of poverty more quickly and are essential in the overall fight to end extreme poverty everywhere.

In 2016, half a billion women still cannot read, 62 million girls are denied the right to education and 155 countries (UN Member States) still have laws that differentiate between men and women. It is outrageous that girls account for 74% of all new HIV infections among adolescents in Africa, and 40% of women on the continent suffer from anemia, which results in 20% of maternal deaths.

2020 is the year that real money and reforms must start to right these wrongs. There are two opportunities in particular that stand out: the Nutrition for Growth Summit and the replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria – key opportunities to boost spending in areas of crucial importance to girls and women and to the fight against extreme poverty overall. On top of nutrition and health, funding for the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the African Development Bank's African Development Fund (ADF) will both be decided in 2020; these four opportunities together could amount to \$100 billion over the next 3-4 years in funds for the poorest people.



In too many countries, being born poor and female means a life sentence of inequality, oppression and poverty – and in too many cases is also a death sentence. A child born in Nigeria is more than 41 times more likely to die before their 5th birthday than a child born in Norway. For those children who do survive past their 5th birthday, access to education is an important indicator for thriving in the future. Globally, 62 million girls will be denied an education. Barriers to education mean that altogether there are half a billion women in the world who cannot read – two-third of the global illiterate population.

The health and nutritional status of girls and women in the developing world is also poor. Some 45% of all mortality amongst children under the age of 5 is linked to malnutrition. Lack of good nutrition continues to plague girls as they move into adolescence and womanhood; more than 500 million women around the world are affected by anemia, which is often caused by iron deficiency and can cause fatigue and lethargy and impair physical capacity and work performance.

Poverty is sexist. But where in the world is it toughest to be born a girl?

Top twenty countries are: Niger, Somalia, Mali, Central African Republic, Yemen, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Comoros, Pakistan, Liberia, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Benin, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Haiti, Djibouti, Mauritania.

Women should have the same opportunities as men. Investments targeted at improving the access of girls and women to quality healthcare, education, nutrition, economic opportunity, the Internet and financial institutions are urgently needed. Not only because all human beings should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their gender, but because investing in women and girls is essential to ending extreme poverty.

Spotlight on nutrition and health.

The Women's Health and Education Center's (WHEC's) various initiatives focus on the importance of nutrition and health. This means that women, especially potential mothers-to-be, are at the center of the solution for future project and program development. Good nutrition is a basic right of every girl and woman, regardless of whether she goes on to have children.

In too many countries, women are far too often unable to get the care they need due to financial barriers, cultural attitudes or the distant location of healthcare facilities. WHEC focuses on health systems strengthening. Epidemics leave women and children more vulnerable.

What We Need in 2020:

1. Nutrition
2. Global Fund
3. Legal Equality
4. Women's Rights
5. Connectivity

Join the efforts!



In The News

Bringing Widows to the Forefront: UN Women to Implement Program for Widows in South Asia

Millions of world's widows endure extreme poverty, ostracism, violence, homelessness, ill health and discrimination. International Widow's Day is commemorated to raise awareness to end all discrimination against the world's widows, and to enable to enjoy their full human rights.



New Delhi – UN Women has launched a three-year regional programme to address the needs of widows in India, Nepal, and Sri-Lanka.

Funded jointly by UN Women's Swiss National Committee and the Standard Chartered Bank, the program will be implemented to reduce the social ostracism faced by widows. This will be done by collecting data and evidence to highlight the stigma widows face, working with widow's coalitions so they can speak up and access public services, and by guaranteeing that discriminatory social practices against

widows are reviewed and repealed. UN Women announced the launch of the new program as part of International Women's Day.

India has an estimated 40 million widows in India and due to religious and social taboos, their lives are often mired by poverty, neglect and deprivation. The time has come to act and create space for widows in mainstream policy and social welfare schemes. Their situation has to be recognized and addressed. The best way to boost the self-esteem and confidence of widows is to help them move up the economic ladder.

A survey done to gauge the situation of widows in India by the Guild of Service and UN Women revealed that a large number of widows are living far below the poverty line defined by the World Bank and even the Planning Commission. Although 70% of the women had heard of the widow's pension scheme, only a quarter of all widows received pension.

The Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) is collaborating with UN Woman Projects for advocacy to make the policy-makers and community leaders understand that widows can contribute productivity to society and that they can make a difference. Plans are also afoot to work with local community leaders so they can help to champion the cause of widows.

While in India, WHEC will work with widows affected by HIV. In Nepal and Sri Lanka, the focus will be on young widows living in conflict areas. The program will be implemented in partnership with UN Woman, UNICEF and the Women for Human Rights.

This program hopefully bring many policy level changes in government schemes, for example, under the widow's pension scheme in Nepal, only widows over 60 years of age are eligible. We would like to lobby that the Government reduce the age.

The Supreme Court of India bans instant divorce in a move to protect Muslim women's rights in 2017. This landmark judgment on 22 August 2017, declared the practice of unilateral and instantaneous triple *talaq* under Muslim personal law unconstitutional by 3:2 majority. The triple "*talaq*" is a practice under which a Muslim man can instantly divorce his wife by uttering the "*talaq*" three times. The five-member bench delivering the historic judgment comprised of judges from different major faiths in India – Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism.

The WHEC is committed to promoting equality and the rights of women from marginalized communities, including minority women in India. We will continue to work with the partners around the world on a

variety of programs to raise awareness of widow's rights and legal entitlements and provide skills and support for their economic empowerment.

Join the initiatives; we welcome everyone!



I Will be Worthy of it

I may not reach the heights I seek,
My untried strength may fail me,
Or, half-way up the mountain peak,
Fierce tempests may assail me.
But though that place I never gain,
Herein lies comfort for my pain—
I will be worthy of it.

I may not triumph in success,
Despite my earnest labor;
I may not grasp results that bless
The efforts of my neighbor;
But though my goal I never see,
This thought shall always dwell with me—
I will be worthy of it.

The golden glory of Love's light
May never fall on my way;
My path may always lead through night,
Like some deserted by-way;
But though life's dearest joy I miss
There lies a nameless strength in this—
I will be worthy of it.

- By Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1855 – 30 October 1919); American poet

*Monthly newsletter of WHEC designed to keep you informed on
The latest UN and NGO activity*

<http://www.WomensHealthSection.com>

