



**THE CASE IS CLEAR:
Investing in Women and Girls is the Key to Ending Global Poverty**

“Women and girls around the world face great challenges. They bear an unjust burden and this must change for the benefit of all humanity. We must act with common purpose and speak with one voice to change global policies and global wills so that gender justice and an end to poverty can be achieved.” **Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Honorary *Breakthrough Summit* Co-Chair (2008)**

The Challenges Facing Women and Girls are Clear

Women are:

- **70 percent** of the poorest and most vulnerable people on earth;
- **Two-thirds** of the world’s illiterate people;
- **7 of 10** hungry people in the world;
- **Owners of one percent** of the world’s farmland;
- **Dying at a rate of 500,000 each year** from preventable complications of pregnancy.

Change Starts with Investment

Evidence shows that investing in women benefits individuals, families, communities, and nations. Unfortunately, these investments are not yet a priority in the effort to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the set of United Nations objectives defined by the global community.

- UN Commission on the Status of Women concluded that, “global commitments to [women’s empowerment]...have yet to be fully implemented.”
- At last count, out of \$69 billion of overseas development assistance, only 3.6% was earmarked for gender equality.

This must change.

- **Jobs:** The Asia-Pacific region would gain \$42 billion to \$47 billion each year if women had greater access to job opportunities.
- **Education:** The children of women with five years of primary education are 40% more likely to live beyond the age of five.
- **Decision making:** South Asia would have 13.4 million fewer undernourished children and Sub-Saharan Africa would see an additional 1.7 million fewer undernourished children if men and women had equal influence in decision-making in the household.

A 21st Century Solution – The Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA)

Now more than ever, innovative approaches to fighting women’s poverty are critical. For the first time, women’s organizations, faith communities and the international development community have come together to tackle the issue, creating one of the most powerful and far-reaching, anti-poverty coalitions in history. WFDA’s goal is to launch a campaign that will increase financial and other investment in women and girls by governments, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and individuals. Over 300 organizations and tens of thousands of activists have joined WFDA, whose founding partners include:

- **InterAction**, the largest coalition of U.S.-based international NGOs, with more than 165 members working in every developing country to expand opportunities and support gender equality in education, health care, agriculture, and small business. www.interaction.org
- **Religions for Peace**, an alliance of more than 70 inter-religious councils, groups, and networks that create effective multi-religious partnerships to stem violent conflict, eradicate poverty, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. www.religionsforpeace.org
- **Women Thrive Worldwide**, the premier U.S. organization advocating for U.S. policies that foster economic opportunity for women living in poverty, which comprises over 50 partner organizations, . www.womenthrive.org
- **Washington National Cathedral’s Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation (CGJR)**, which forges effective partnerships between inter-faith and multi-religious communities to focus on poverty, social justice, and peacemaking initiatives around the globe. www.cathedral.org

WFDA will draw on the unprecedented reach, resources and expertise of its members to change the lives of millions of women and girls.

Forging a New Path: The Breakthrough Summit

Breakthrough: The Women, Faith, and Development Summit to End Global Poverty is the launch of a lasting campaign involving leaders and innovators from the women, faith, and development communities, NGOs, governments, private institutions, and corporations, all of whom will show their resolve by making new, concrete commitments to launch programs to support women and girls, including:

- **Multi-Issue:** United Nations Population Fund will undertake a far-reaching campaign to address maternal mortality, violence against women, faith-based outreach, female genital mutilation, and empowering adolescent girls in more than 50 countries.
- **Gender Equity:** International Rescue Committee will address global gender issues like gender violence, education, and economic development.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The Sister Fund and Women’s Funding Network will significantly expand the “Women Moving Millions” campaign to increase the collective assets of foundations/NGOs serving global women.
- **Financial Independence:** United Way will expand its network by bringing Women’s Leadership Councils to 46 countries.

“We have such a huge amount in common and [we must] tackle poverty by focusing on empowering women and girls. We are up against the clock of failure to meet the MDGs...So let’s resolve that this Breakthrough Summit lives up to its name, and that we live up to our commitments.” **Her Excellency Mary Robinson, Honorary *Breakthrough Summit* Co-Chair**