

# THE WOMEN, FAITH, & DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

## *A Call to Partnership for Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction Worldwide*

*The Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA)—a unique partnership of internationally focused faith, development, and women’s organizations—is a powerful new force dedicated to increasing investments for women’s and girls’ empowerment around the world and for reducing global poverty. WFDA unites the moral authority and expertise of faith, development and women’s communities in common cause to secure breakthroughs in policy and budget commitments by governments, multilaterals, and donors on behalf of women worldwide.*

### Who We Are

WFDA is co-founded by Washington National Cathedral’s Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation, Interaction’s Commission on the Advancement of Women, Religions for Peace and the Women’s Edge Coalition. More than 70 organizations from faith communities and networks, and from development and women’s organizations in the north and in the global south participated in a series of meetings in 2006 and 2007 to form the Alliance. Partnership is open to any organization that supports and aligns with WFDA’s principles as expressed in this Call to Partnership.



*First meeting of the Women, Faith, and Development Alliance on June 28, 2006*

### Our Core Values

We share a commitment to equal rights for women and men. The equal rights and inherent dignity of all members of the human family are affirmed by the world’s religious traditions and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1995, the women of the world and governments created a comprehensive agenda for women’s rights, the Beijing Platform

for Action. This global consensus document is the foundation for WFDA’s vision and actions. In 2000, with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, governments and donors renewed their pledge to uphold women’s rights and also endorsed women’s empowerment as integral to eradicating poverty and to achieving sustainable development.

### What We Aim to Accomplish

Unfortunately, these verbal commitments have not been demonstrated by the commitments of resources at the level needed for real breakthroughs for women’s rights and for poverty reduction globally.

The Alliance focuses on increasing financial investments by the UN, national governments, and donor organizations for women’s and girls’ empowerment around the world. We will achieve these aims through an advocacy and action campaign supported by branded international communications. We will engage and unite the leaders of our own organizations and others in the faith, development and women’s communities, and target key United States and international policy makers to support WFDA policy and legislative platform. WFDA will measure its success by policy change and new resources allocated for women and girls’ empowerment.

## Why Invest in Women and Girls?

Investing in the empowerment of women and girls yields double dividends. When women and girls' rights are promoted and upheld, women benefit, and so do their families and societies. Empowered women are agents of the common good and uplift the well-being of the human family overall. Yet gender discrimination continues to be pervasive worldwide:

- The vast majority of the one billion people living on less than one dollar a day are women;
- For every year beyond fourth grade that girls go to school, family size drops 20 percent and wages rise 20 percent;
- Approximately one in three of the world's women will experience gender-related violence in her lifetime, with rates reaching 70 percent in some countries;
- In sub-Saharan Africa, for every ten adult men living with HIV there are about 14 adult women who are infected with the virus;
- Each year more than 500,000 women (at least one

- per minute) die from pregnancy related causes;
- Jobs for women also mean support for families: it is estimated that up to 15 people are supported through one job in the apparel sector, the vast majority of whose employees worldwide are women;
- Women produce one half of the world's food but own only one percent of its farmland; and
- Women hold just 17 percent of seats in parliament worldwide.

Research and experience show that women's empowerment is essential to reducing global poverty. Educating girls contributes to increased economic productivity and improved family nutrition. Giving women the power to make decisions can strengthen family healthcare, stem the spread of HIV/AIDS, and promote long-lasting peace. WFDA seeks to fully activate this positive cycle of women's empowerment and human well-being.

## Why the Faith, Development and Women's Communities Are Joining Forces

In 2000, 189 governments made an unprecedented commitment to lift people out of poverty. These commitments, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set a series of targets to cut poverty in half by 2015. WFDA is contributing to this goal by elevating women's empowerment as a top priority in development policies, programs and spending. Our communities have dedicated tremendous time, talent and resources to eradicating poverty and improving women's lives and have accomplished much good. Yet the enormity of global poverty demands that we transcend the separations within and between our communities and develop new synergies for action. WFDA members are committed to using our combined expertise and the strength of our constituencies to mobilize around the "big idea" of setting women's empowerment as a key priority for government and donor spending. Our united voices will amplify the important ongoing work of each of our communities, and our combined power and moral authority will catalyze the long-overdue tipping point for women and girls' equality.

## Launching the Women, Faith and Development Alliance

WFDA will launch its international action and advocacy campaign for investment in women and girls at a Women's World Summit in Spring 2008 in Washington, DC. We invite you to join us as we shape the Summit and set our global advocacy targets for the next five years.

*For more information or to become a partner in the Alliance, please contact  
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