



2011 Ecumenical Advocacy Days: Development, Security & Economic Justice: What's Gender Got to Do with It?

"Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates." - Proverbs 31

2011 Talking Points

When you meet with your members of Congress or their staff aides, give them this message:

As people of faith who believe that society and government has a divinely-mandated responsibility to care for the poor and protect the vulnerable, we urge members of Congress to recognize a moral obligation, in a time when more persons are suffering than ever before, to protect and strengthen the health, well-being, and security of women and families in 2011 and 2012 by:

- Voting to fully fund at or above FY2010 levels programs that serve families – especially those struggling to overcome poverty – domestically and around the world, and
- Voting to re-authorize and fully-fund the Violence Against Women Act and co-sponsor the International Violence Against Women Act when it is re-introduced.

As you talk with your members of Congress, remember that the stories you bring with you bring the greatest impact. Tell the stories of people you know, programs you work with, and the work you know your church does – in your local community and around the world.

Urge your members of Congress to: Fully-fund programs at or above FY2010 levels that serve women and families - especially those struggling to overcome poverty - domestically and around the world.

Because of their often subjugated or marginalized status, women are generally more vulnerable than men when it comes to poverty. Women and their families can succeed and generate multiplying impacts in society when they have the right tools and resources available to them - economic opportunity, basic health care and education, the ability to participate in decisions that affect them and recognition of their basic rights and dignity. Speak from your own experience – stories are critical.

- Women constitute 60 percent of the poorest people in the world today. Women and children are those most affected by proposed spending cuts.
- Women produce half the world's food, but own only 1 percent of its farmland.
- Proposals are being made to significantly cut the human needs programs domestically and in our foreign assistance that many women depend on to make ends meet and provide their children with food, healthcare, and a safe home [for specific programs and more budget talking points, see the budget talking points sheet in your packet]. Since the recession began, U.S. women— especially those who are single heads of households— have faced unique challenges. Of the 984,000 new jobs created in 2010, less than 1 of every 20 went to women.
- With two-thirds of American households fully or partially reliant on women's paychecks, ensuring that women have jobs and receive family assistance when in need has become more critical than ever. In a time of long-term high levels of unemployment, programs of job-training and job creation must be supported.
- Historically, Congress has protected the poor in the context of deficit reduction. In fact, the three major deficit-reduction packages of the last two decades — the 1990, 1993, and 1997 packages— reduced poverty and disadvantage by including substantial increases in the EITC (the 1990 and

1993 packages) and food stamps (1993), and by creating the Children's Health Insurance Program (1997).

- Spending for programs that serve people struggling to overcome poverty here and abroad provide effective economic growth. Low-income women as heads of families are most likely to spend these benefits quickly and in their local communities, consequently creating jobs and reducing the deficit. Cutting charitable programs will devastate those living in poverty, cost jobs, disrupt the fragile recovery, and in the long run will harm, not help, our fiscal situation.
- Cuts will cause all of us in the U.S. to see our own well being and security placed at a great risk because of a less equal and more unstable society and a more insecure and desperate world.

While Congress must take appropriate steps to restore jobs and address the country's fiscal problems, we must not cut programs for those who can least afford it – women and low-income families.

***Tell your members of Congress or staff that a vital part of ensuring the health and well-being of women requires helping protect women and girls from violence. Urge them to:
Re-authorize and fully-fund the Violence Against Women Act and co-sponsor the International Violence Against Women Act when it is re-introduced:***

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was the first federal legislation acknowledging domestic violence and sexual assault as a crime. It also provides federal resources for community-coordinated responses to violence against women. VAWA, originally passed in 1994, is to be re-authorized in 2011.

- In 2009, U.S. domestic violence programs served more than 65,000 adults and children daily
- Unfortunately, over 9,200 of those requests went unmet because domestic violence agencies lacked the funding and staff to meet the demand.
- Most common reasons given by women who stay in abusive relationships are lack of money, shelter and police support. We need to support and fully fund programs that protect women.

The International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) would make stopping violence against women and girls a priority in the United States diplomacy and foreign aid. The legislation is designed to stop the brutal violence against girls and women that afflicts communities and countries across the globe – the domestic violence, rape, acid burnings, so-called honor killings and other gross violations of human rights.

- Experts estimate that up to 1 in 3 women will be beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in their lifetimes, with rates reaching 70% in some countries.
- Nearly 50% of all sexual assaults worldwide are against girls aged 15 years or younger.
- There is a link between poverty and domestic violence. Poverty affects violence against women domestically and globally. When poor women get just a little extra money, they put it back into their families. They spend it on things like school, medicine and housing – things that improve the lives of children and help them to contribute more to their communities and countries.
- Free from violence, women and girls would be safe to access the poverty reduction, education and health programs that the U.S. supports. When women and girls thrive, societies are more likely to prosper economically, reduce rates of HIV and AIDS, decrease child and maternal mortality, and have more democratic governments.
- We want our government to help end violence against women and girls because we see it as an appalling human rights violation, a dangerous public health epidemic, an often-irreversible path to poverty, and a hideous tactic of war. Enacting the International Violence Against Women Act is a step in the right direction.