



A CALL TO ACTION

ACWW Resolutions passed at the 28th Triennial Conference

ACWW member societies voted to adopt these Resolutions at the 28th Triennial Conference at the University of Warwick in August 2016. Traditionally, these resolutions have been circulated to the member societies for action, as indeed they were this Triennium. As ACWW reaches ever more women around the world, it was felt helpful to provide additional information for member societies to support their action and activities. References are shown on page 29.

Food Sovereignty

It is the belief of ACWW that all people have the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food, produced through ecologically sound, safe and sustainable methods.

Food security, as defined by the World Food Summit in 1996, will exist when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”¹.

ACWW’s members urge national agricultural programmes to adopt the principals of Food Sovereignty, and ensure that there is equity and full access to resources for rural women and communities. This would reduce rural poverty, environmental degradation and assist with achieving food security. There is also a need for local producers to have access to local markets, thus supporting their continued existence and contribution to local communities.

Food Sovereignty is directly related to SDG2 and the Zero Hunger Challenge.²

Since the year 2000, global hunger has declined from 15% to 11%, but this leaves more than 790 million people who lack regular access to adequate food and dietary energy

Global food companies report higher profits than ever in developing world ³

2 ZERO HUNGER



Fructose

Worldwide, obesity is becoming a serious health problem. On advice from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in 2014, the European Union (EU) has ruled that food and drink manufacturers can claim their sweetened products are healthier if they replace more than 30% of the glucose and sucrose they contain with fructose.

Fructose has a lower glycaemic index (GI), meaning it causes a less rapid and extreme blood sugar spike as sucrose or glucose. However, it is metabolised differently, and excess is stored in the liver as fat, which may cause life-threatening diseases. While refined fructose creates a lower glycaemic response in the short term, compared to other sugar, in the long term it causes greater metabolic havoc than sugar, as has been repeatedly demonstrated in scientific studies.

According to the Department of Physiology, at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, there is significant need for further human studies on the impact of fructose:

“Consuming large amounts of fructose can lead to the development of a complete metabolic syndrome in rodents. In humans, fructose consumed in moderate to high quantities in the diet increases plasma triglycerides and alters hepatic glucose homeostasis, but does not appear to cause muscle insulin resistance or high blood pressure in the short term. Further human studies are required to delineate the effects of fructose in humans.”⁴

ACWW members call on governments to ban food and drink makers from claiming their sweetened products are healthier if they use fructose until proven this is true

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



5

Shale Gas

Shale gas is natural gas that is found beneath the ground, trapped within shale formations. It is increasingly used in parts of the world such as the United States of America, and there exists significant international controversy over methods of extraction including hydraulic fracturing, or ‘fracking’.

Fracking involves drilling down into the earth, before a high-pressure water and chemical mixture is directed at the rock to release the gas inside. The process can be executed vertically or, more frequently, by drilling horizontally into the rock layer, creating new pathways for the gas.

The controversy exists because there has been very limited research into the mid- to long-term geological and environmental impacts of fracking, particularly as it relates to earthquakes. It also uses huge amounts of water, which must be transported to the sites, both of which have environmental impacts of their own.

ACWW urges member societies to request their governments gather sufficient data on the impact of fracking before allowing shale gas exploration to commence. This research is important as those companies who apply for fracking licences are able to exert significant pressure through lobbying, based on profit projections rather than social or environmental impact.

An energy source that requires water in vast quantities and which may detrimental affects on the environment around it, and those communities who live nearby, is not sustainable and should not be the focus of national energy policies.

SDG 7 builds towards affordable and clean energy⁷, whilst SDG 9 calls on for the building of resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation⁸. SDG 12 ensures sustainable consumption and production patterns, also very relevant in this case⁹.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



ACWW Member Societies are calling on their local and national governments for action on this issue, highlighting their own local communities, food producers and consumers.

Sustainable Energy

As 2014 opened the United Nations decade of Sustainable Energy for All, ACWW urges the promotion of community energy projects, and universal access to sustainable energy.

The grave impact of lack of clean energy on health, particularly for women and children, is not widely recognised. The first two years of the SE4All initiative are dedicated to the complex ties between energy, women, children and health. More than one billion people in the world still have no access to electricity; millions more rely on unsustainable and polluting fuels for cooking.

In the developed world the problem is not generally one of access, but of inefficiency and pollution. 'Affordable, Clean Energy' – the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goal 7 – sets national targets for energy access, renewable energy and energy efficiency; locally generated energy is cleaner, more efficient and more secure. The goal of the resolution 'Secure Sustainable Energy' is *'working together for a better future'*.

Energy is crucial for achieving almost all of the Sustainable Development Goals, from its role in the eradication of poverty through to health, education, industrialization, water and combating climate change ⁶

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



The proportion of the global population with access to electricity has increased steadily, from 79% in 2000 to 85% in 2012. Still, 1.1 billion people are without this valuable service. Recent global progress in this area has been driven largely by Asia, where access is expanding at more than twice the pace of demographic growth. Of those gaining access to electricity worldwide since 2010, 80% are urban dwellers, leaving a severe deficit for rural communities and women in particular.

ACWW's Project 987 provided training and support for the production of compressed recycled materials used to create smokeless charcoal briquettes for cooking. This is just one element of community education use, and a sample of the kind of project that allows rural societies to be empowered through sustainable independence. Furthermore, it has been shown that cooking using smoking fuels inside homes can have serious impact on the health of pregnant women and their children.

Water Supply

ACWW urges all countries to vigorously protect the supply of potable, farming and industrial water through the best technical information available that will provide sustainability of life.

Water and sanitation are at the very core of sustainable development, critical to the survival of people and the planet. Sustainable Development Goal 6 not only addresses the issues relating to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, but also the quality and sustainability of water resources worldwide.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



According to the United Nations, in 2015 more than 946 million people lacked sanitation facilities, with no option but to practise open defecation. This continues to present a major risk to public health and the environment ¹⁰

More progress has been made in access to drinking water. In 2015, 6.6 billion people, or 91% of the global population, used an improved drinking water source, versus 82% in 2000. Despite this improvement, an estimated 663 million people were using unimproved water sources or surface water that year. While coverage was around 90% or more in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania, widespread inequalities persist within and among countries. Moreover, not all improved sources are safe. For instance, in 2012 it was estimated that at least 1.8 billion people were exposed to drinking water sources contaminated with faecal matter.

Effective water and sanitation management also depends on the participation of stakeholders. According to a 2013-2014 Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water survey, 83% of the 94 countries surveyed reported that procedures for stakeholder participation were clearly defined in law or policy.

In the Sustainable Development Goals, the focus is being refined to also include the participation of local communities, which will be captured in the next cycle of Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water monitoring.

Sensible use of water, and avoiding its waste is a global and personal responsibility.

Eradicable Disease

ACWW societies and members urge their governments and health organisations to continue local vaccination efforts of potentially eradicable diseases in order to work toward area elimination which would then result in global eradication.

To date smallpox is the only infectious disease that effects humans that has been eradicated and we are close to a second global eradication, that being Guinea Worm Disease. Other diseases Lymphatic Filariasis, Measles, Rubella, and Taeniasis/Systicercosis are currently potentially eradicable with Poliomyelitis at the top of the list.

In some cases there is a public misconception of the seriousness which can be a chief obstacle to eradication. Incredible headway has been made and we need eradication efforts to continue.

Vaccines keep children alive and healthy by protecting them against disease. Immunization is especially important for the hardest to reach families as it can also be a bridge to other life-saving care for mothers and children in isolated communities – such as child nutritional screening, anti-malarial mosquito nets, vitamin A supplements and de-worming tablets. Immunization is one of the most successful and cost-effective public health investments we can make for future generations.

In 2015, nearly 1 in 5 infants, or 19.4 million children, missed out on the basic vaccines they need to stay healthy ¹¹

Low immunization levels compromise gains in all other areas of health for mothers and children. The poorest, most vulnerable children who need immunization are the most continue to be the least likely to get it.

UNICEF and its partners are working to change these numbers and ensure that all children are successfully protected with vaccines. But, if immunization is not prioritized, the most marginalized children will not get vaccines, which could mean the difference between life and death.

1/3rd of deaths in children under 5 years can be prevented by vaccines ¹²

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



CIVIL SOCIETY & GENDER

The worldwide need for food production, the eradication of poverty, and the urgent move towards sustainability needs strong citizens of all ages. It has been clearly shown that budget cuts and so-called 'austerity' programmes disproportionately affect women and, more specifically, rural women. There is evidence of rising precarious working conditions, increasing discrimination in the labour market with a subsequent shift to informal work, rising levels of poverty, reduced access to services, and rising levels of domestic violence, accompanied by cuts in vital support services. Solutions are needed which are built on the positive effects of gender equality on well-being, employment and people-centred sustainable growth.

Food, care and health are in the hearts of women. Working in these fields contributes to the development of life-standards and to the eradication of poverty. Investing in sustainability is a chance to restore the gender balance and using the knowledge of the region of both men and women.

An equal relation between civil society, the government and private sector is essential. Women's organizations, as a part of that civil society, play a role in empowering women through their network and programs at local, regional or national level. The main goals for women are: encouragement in decision making and participation, learning by doing, learning together, strengthening personal development and competences, such as entrepreneurship. Stimulation of knowledge sharing and strengthening civil society, such as women's organizations, is effective for the livability (survival expectancy) and continuation of projects in local communities.

It is important to recognise that inequality exists at every level of society. Women hold only 22% of parliamentary seats worldwide. They spend, on average, 90% of their earned income on their families (in contrast with 30-40% for men) and represent two thirds of illiterate adults globally and only 5% of national heads of state.

"There is strong evidence from all regions of the world demonstrating that increasing investments in women's human capital, especially education, should be a priority for countries seeking to increase both economic growth and human welfare. Investing in quality secondary education for girls yields high economic and social returns." ¹²

Global averages show that one in four women are physically or sexually abused during pregnancy and suffer invasive and abusive treatments such as forced early marriage, domestic violence and murder, and female genital mutilation/cutting.

Alongside our work towards the Global Survey of the Living Conditions of Rural Women, ACWW members call on all governments to integrate a gender perspective in their policies and to create an enabling environment for economic and social development with specific emphasis on those in rural areas.



"Evidence from Africa, Asia and Latin America consistently shows that families benefit when women have greater status and power within the household. Increased control over income gives women a stronger bargaining position over economic decisions regarding consumption, investment and production. When women have more influence over economic decisions, their families allocate more income to food, health, education, children's clothing and children's nutrition. 15 Social safety-net programmes in many countries now target women specifically for these reasons. A large number of studies have linked women's income and greater bargaining power within the family to improved child nutritional status, which in turn influences health outcomes and educational attainment." ¹⁴

WOMEN IN CAMPS

ACWW members urge their governments to take action to stop sexual abuse of women and children in refugee camps and shelters. This is an increasingly critical issue, with internal conflicts and insurgencies causing a vast increase in the number of refugees.

There are **65.3 million** people around the world who have been forced from their homes. This includes 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under 18 years¹⁵

Initiatives such as the UNHCR's 'Safe from the Start' programme are intended to provide gender specific and sensitive, preventative action for refugees. This work is crucial and ACWW calls upon all governments, particularly those actively dealing with the refugee and migration crisis, to act quickly and decisively to bring this situation to an end.

34,000 people are forcibly displaced every day as a result of conflict or persecution. This is the highest level of displacement in history¹⁶

The status and lives of refugees has an impact on each of the following SDGs, and is crucial in establishing a safer, healthier and more peaceful world.



WHAT TO DO

There are many ways that organisations, societies and individuals can influence their governments. From issuing public statements, to writing to your elected representatives, attending demonstrations or protests and helping to organise community activities, your involvement and activism is crucial. Why not stand for election to represent your views and those of others like you?

In the next column there is ACWW's public statement marking the International Day of Families, which was issued in May 2017. This gives you an example of the kind of document that can be sent to your representatives or policy-makers. Always remember to cite your data - legislators find it harder to ignore hard facts and figures!

REFERENCES

¹ World Food Summit, 13-17 November 1996
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² SDG 2: Zero Hunger
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2>

^{3a} Unilever 2015 Profit Figures accessed 6/2/16
https://www.unilever.com/Images/q4-2015-full-announcement_tcm244-470010_en.pdf

^{3b} Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Annual Report 2016
http://s2.q4cdn.com/056532643/files/doc_financials/2016/annual/2016-Annual-Report-PDF.pdf

⁴ Metabolic effects of fructose
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16778579>

⁵ SDG 3: Good Health & Well-being
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>

^{6 & 7} SDG 7: Ensure access to sustainable energy
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg7>

⁸ SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg9>

⁹ SDG 12: Responsible Consumption & Production
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg12>

¹⁰ SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6>

¹¹ UNICEF Immunization Programme
<https://www.unicef.org/immunization/>

¹² Accelerating Secondary Education for Girls
<http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/2014-04-GPE-UN-GEI-Accelerating-Secondary-Education-Girls.pdf>

^{13a} SDG 5: Gender Equality
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>

^{13b} SDG 10: Reduce Inequality
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10>

^{13c} SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

¹⁴ FAO Education builds Sustainability
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e03.pdf>

¹⁵ UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency
<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html>

¹⁶ UNHCR: Safe from the Start
<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/575a83dd5.html>

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES 2017

A public statement from ACWW

As the world marks the International Day of Families on 15 May 2017, we bear witness to a world in turmoil. Never before have families played a more crucial role in our societies, and never before has the need for strong family bonds and inter-generational cooperation been so necessary. The United Nations has declared a theme of 'Families, education and well-being' for 2017's International Day, and this speaks directly to the focal points of so much of the work done by the Associated Country Women of the World and other NGOs.

We see every day the need for stronger communities, and the open, honest, and brave discussion between those who may disagree, and families play a crucial role in this. Children raised in fear bring fear to others. Peace, unity and friendship comes from those who are nurtured and supported by their family - be it the parents, or carers, grandparents, siblings and others who can guide and encourage our young people to walk a path through life with open eyes and hearts. Never before has the connection between children and grandparents been so strong. In many regions of the world we see grandparents stepping in to care for younger generations when parents are forced to work long hours, or cannot afford child care; in other countries there are whole communities who have been decimated by illness such as HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, leaving grandparents to raise their children's children.

We must support all families - from demanding universal access to good quality education for children, to sensible childcare options and sustainable support for parents, to life-long learning, and ensuring quality of living for grandparents and older generations. Work-family balance must be encouraged and supported, assisting parents in their educational and caregiving roles - the private sector must play a part in this, and responsible employment practice will benefit all stakeholders.

ACWW connects and supports women and communities worldwide, and our project funding has had significant impacts on communities around the world. Our 1000th project was funded in 2015, providing IT skills to young and older women in India; this enables and empowers both ends of the age spectrum in their daily living, and is a significant step towards sustainability of education and training in the local area. The latest round of completed projects funded by ACWW included 5 Health Education projects, 4 focused on education and capacity building, 2 agricultural training and development projects and 1 nutrition and home economics project. These projects, along with 7 water and sanitation projects and 4 income generation schemes, benefited 142,375 people, of whom 91,187 were women and 15,295 were children. ACWW is committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and recognises that families have a specific role in ensuring the achievement of SDG4, which secures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

With many countries suffering from internal conflict, and much of the world becoming more divided, nationalistic and isolationist, the role of the family in encouraging cultural and cross-community engagement and collaboration is crucial. We call on all governments and global bodies to work towards securing safe, fair and reasonable living conditions for families - particularly urgent for those living in refugee and internally-displaced person camps. War has a huge and unmitigated impact on families in so many ways, and we further call on those governments around the world leading wars of aggression to consider the realities they impose not only on the families of those they target, but also those in their own countries. Peace, communication, and a collective move towards global sustainability can only be achieved with the support of the family, but are also necessary for the existence of the family and thus all of our futures.

Ruth Shanks AM
ACWW World President

¹ UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform "Sustainable Development Goal 4"
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>
"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"

² United Nations 2017 International Day of Families "Families, education & well-being"
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/international-day-of-families/idf2017.html>

³ ACWW Projects
<https://www.acww.org.uk/projects.html>