

## BPW First Vice President's Message on International Anti-Corruption Day

9 December 2011



### Invitation to BPW Federations and Associate Clubs to Participate

I would like to pass on this invitation to BPW Federations to add your support to International Anti-Corruption Day on December 9. The UN Against Corruption Today (ACT) website explains the impacts of corruption and the initiatives involved in combating it. Action against corruption has links to many BPW programmes and I encourage BPW Federations to respond in whatever way you can. See the suggestions from ACT at the end of this message.

Links to BPW programmes include the following:

- BPW is a signatory to the UN Global Compact. Principle No 10 reads: *"Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery"*.
- Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) is a UN Global Compact initiative offering guidance on the empowerment of women in the workplace. WEPs underpin a major BPW Triennium Theme of *Empowered Women Leading Business*. In the ACT initiative, business is highlighted as a playing a major role in the fight against corruption.
- Corruption has a major impact on Rural Women – the theme of CSW 56 - and is a factor to be considered for BPW projects in this area.

Women bear almost all responsibility for meeting basic needs of the family, yet are systematically denied the resources, information and freedom of action they need to fulfil this responsibility. The vast majority of the world's poor are women, particularly those that reside in the rural area. Two-thirds of the world's illiterates are female. Of the millions of school age children not in school, the majority are girls. And today, HIV/AIDS is rapidly becoming a woman's disease. In several Southern African countries, more than three-quarter of all young people living with HIV are women.

The current world food price crisis is having a severe impact on women. Around the world, millions of people eat two or three times a day, but a significant percentage of women eat only once. And now, many women are denying themselves even that one meal to ensure that their children are fed. These women are already suffering the effects of even more severe malnutrition, which inevitably will be their children's fate as well. The impact of the crisis will be with us for many years.

Studies show that when women are supported and empowered, all of society benefits. Their families are healthier, more children go to school, agricultural productivity improves and income increases. In fact, the rural communities become more resilient. Women empowerment can be seen as the capacity of women to increase their self-reliant strategies through the inducement of education. The empowerment of women has recognized as a pre-requisite for achieving effective and people-centered development and empowerment strategy.

Corruption is not new, is a global phenomenon. Corruption is one of the pathological factors affecting rural women empowerment, poverty and hunger eradication in the globe. Specifically, “Corrupt behavior” involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit. It is an “effort to secure” wealth or power through illegal means-private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private gain.

More so, to explore the identified problem, it is imperative to understand the nature and characteristics of corruption”. Some studies have taken a holistic (broader) approach in the discussions of corruption by dividing it into many forms and sub-divisions. These are:

- Political Corruption
- Bureaucratic Corruption and
- Electoral Corruption.

**Therefore, if corruption is not adequately addressed, poverty and hunger eradication among the rural women will be in vain.**

Analysts believe that any economy with a huge population of women has the potential to transmute from a poverty-stricken nation to a vibrant economy; through adequate empowerment of women especially the rural dwellers. Women are crucial, beyond certain customary duties and procreation efforts. They have the potential to turn an ailing economy around, at the family, local, state or national levels, through their in-built economic strength, organizational skills, and single-minded focus to surmount obstacles posed by their environment, culture, and ‘stronger’ partners, the men. There is no gainsaying the fact that not all women are adequately positioned to ensure optimal output from their environment, but there is no denying the fact that most women who successfully attain positions of power in the society, put in more effort than the men to ensure a better life for the good of all.

Business and Professional Women International made the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) – (a top organizational priority) Equality means business, a partnership initiatives of UN Women and the UN Global compact that encourages business, civil society, the United Nations and Governments to advance and empower women in the workplace, in the marketplace and in the community.

**Principle 4 of Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) is to promote education, training and professional development for women.** This is in concert with Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, is to promote gender equality and empower women. Women play a vital role in our society. There is a relationship between the empowerment of women and reduction of hunger and poverty, especially if there is a creation of wealth. Nevertheless, Information Technology is an important tool in ensuring that marginalized groups, especially the women, are included in the development of the global information society. IT alone cannot end gender inequality; it can go a long way catalysing social change and empowerment.

The International Anti- corruption Day is aimed at creating public awareness of corruption. Public awareness of corruption and its effects should be taken to the grassroots. Corruption is an issue

that affects all countries around the world. It can refer to destruction of one's honesty or loyalty through undermining moral integrity or acting in a way that shows a lack of integrity or honesty. Corruption is detrimental to the growth and development of any economy of any country.

**LET EVERYBODY ACT AGAINST CORRUPTION TODAY AS WE ALL CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION ACROSS THE WORLD.**

The ACT website provides compelling evidence of the effects of corruption, highlights successes so far, and invites other NGOs to add their support. It provides a number of practical suggestions and communication materials such as the logo at the head of this message.

<http://www.unodc.org/yournocounts/en/about-the-campaign/index.html>

Here is an extract:

*"Fighting corruption is a global concern because corruption is found in both rich and poor countries, and evidence shows that it hurts poor people disproportionately. It contributes to instability, poverty and is a dominant factor driving fragile countries towards state failure.*

*Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, the media and citizens around the world are joining forces to fight this crime. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) are at the forefront of these efforts.*

*The 2011 joint international campaign focuses on how corruption hinders efforts to achieve the internationally agreed upon MDGs, undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to human rights violations, distorts markets, erodes quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish."*

*"We hope you'll come together with UNDP and UNODC to ACT against corruption by:*

- *Organizing activities in your community to mark 9 December*
- *Publishing the campaign banner on your website*
- *Utilizing the campaign "Advocacy Guide" and "Call to Action Matrix"*
- *Using the "ACT against corruption" logo on publications & at events*
- *Adding your logo to the campaign poster or leaflet*
- *Creating a link to the ACT website*
- *Sending a message to your networks about the campaign."*

On behalf of BPW International, I trust you will be able to act on some of these suggestions.

**Huguette Akplogan-Dossa**

**1st Vice President UN 2011-2014**

**BPW International**