

Preface

Research, study and action are all essential ingredients of positive change. This selection of papers presented during the 26th Conference of the International Federation of University Women in Graz, Austria, demonstrates how an interdisciplinary approach can widen horizons and lead to effective ideas for societal change. The challenge for the future is to translate the research into action to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. When IFUW members chose the theme *Women's Future, World Future: Education for Survival and Progress?* as their 1992-98 Study and Action Programme, they recognized that education is the key to attitudinal change. The theme also reflected the concerns in the same period expressed at major world conferences: Environment and Development (1992), Population and Development (1994), Social Development (1995), the 4th World Conference on Women (1995) and the World Conference on Higher Education (1998). The necessity for research and data to support the calls for action from each Conference are well documented. IFUW Conferences afford opportunities for members to exchange ideas, research, and strategies for action. They can also show how we can build on past experiences to meet new challenges. In a world of increasing specialization, IFUW can offer an opportunity for graduates to approach their own subject area from an interdisciplinary perspective. Whether we are discussing the impact of globalization in all its aspects, poverty, violence against women and girls, or the necessity of more women achieving positions of power and decision-making in all sectors of society, education backed by research can lead to the implementation of positive change.

The World Declaration on Higher Education states in Article 2 that "Higher Education has acquired an unprecedented role in present day society, as a vital component of cultural, social, economic and political development and as a pillar of endogenous capacity building, the consolidation of human rights, sustainable development, democracy and peace in a context of justice." As graduate women we have a special responsibility and challenge to empower women and girls to reach their full potential and to enable them to gain the self confidence and skills necessary to cope with the complexities of our global society. It is a pleasure for me to write a preface to this selection of papers which reflect some of the key issues of our advocacy in international forums and that have been the focus of other IFUW publications.

They also reflect the link to the IFUW 1998-2001 Study and Action Programme: *Globalization: Connections through Education*. IFUW is grateful to the authors and editors that have made this publication possible. It is our hope that this book will inspire other women graduates to use some of the ideas presented here for further research and scholarship.

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President IFUW 1998-2001