



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
16 December 2008

Original: English

---

### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-third session

2-13 March 2009

Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS**

**Statement submitted by Altrusa International, Armenian International Women’s Association, Associated Country Women of the World, Congregation of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Association of Women in Radio and Television, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers, International Federation of University Women, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, Soroptimist International, Trickle Up Program, United States Committee for UNIFEM, Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

---

\* E/CN.6/2009/1.



## Statement\*

We, international and national non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and members of the NGO Committee on UNIFEM, would like to make note of the many substantive contributions of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM, to the achievement of the priority theme for this year's Commission on the Status of Women, "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS."

UNIFEM's activities focus on four strategic areas:

- Strengthening women's economic security and rights
- Ending violence against women
- Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls
- Achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war

Advancing women's human rights in each of these areas is central to creating the fundamental changes in societies that are the prerequisites to the realization of the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women.

Because socially constructed gender roles are not only deeply rooted in social and cultural norms, but often reinforced by the laws, political structures and economic and social policies of a country, UNIFEM has been a leader in the United Nations system in assisting Governments in implementing their legal obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. UNIFEM has also trained NGOs to use their Governments' commitments under the Convention to hold their Governments accountable for their promises, as well as to advocate for constitutional changes, judicial decisions, enactment of new national laws, and the creation of government programmes and policies directed at women's empowerment and the realization of substantive equality between women and men at national and local levels.

Stereotypical gender roles perpetuate unequal power relations between men and women and impact women first in the family where unequal sharing of domestic chores and care-giving restrict women's access to education, employment and limits their ability to participate in the public sphere. The economic value of women's unpaid labour as a contribution to economic growth and social development is vastly under-acknowledged. UNIFEM has pioneered the employment of time-use studies, which have provided data and analysis to national Governments and civil society stakeholders that can give direction to budget allocations that can provide training services to women, child care, elder care facilities, transportation, access to water and fuel. These efforts offer women opportunities to engage in the larger economic and political opportunities of society on a more equal basis. UNIFEM is also working with women in local communities throughout the world to create employment opportunities for women, providing training, managerial and marketing skills and technological expertise that allow them to make the most of such opportunities.

---

\* Issued without formal editing.

Violence against women, a problem of pandemic proportions, shows us that in most cultures, women are still considered unequal to men and that the attitudinal changes requisite to the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women have yet to be realized. One in every three women worldwide will be subjected to violence in her lifetime, with the abuser most often someone known to her. Moreover, the economic costs of violence against women impoverish individuals, families and communities and reduce economic development in every nation. A 2003 survey in the United States estimated the annual cost of domestic violence to be \$5.9 billion dollars: \$4.1 billion in medical and health services and \$1.8 billion in lost productivity. The United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women, managed by UNIFEM, has awarded \$18 million in grants to over 260 local and national initiatives in 120 countries to eradicate gender-based violence. UNIFEM, which was a crucial partner with NGOs in the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325, has a strong programmatic focus on preventing and protecting women from sexual and gender-based violence in countries in conflict or which have recently emerged from conflict. UNIFEM's efforts to ensure that women are a part of all peace negotiations, and the creation of priorities that include the needs of women and girls in post-conflict reconstruction, are crucial to retooling societal commitments to promote equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

UNIFEM strategies to eliminate violence against women have also included addressing its roots in the minds of men who perpetrate it, in the four countries in which the Partnership for Peace project helps create court managed anti-battering programmes. UNIFEM's Gender Empowerment Zones is an effort to combat HIV/AIDS in women and men through training sessions focusing on the benefits of equality between women and men. In the Caribbean, UNIFEM workshops with government officials reviewed the gender implications of national AIDS strategies.

UNIFEM has recognized and incorporated into its core work the concept that when women organize and participate in local and national governance structures, especially decision-making, their voices and influence in policy development can have a direct and beneficial impact on their lives and those of their families. In country after country around the world, UNIFEM is building the capacity of individual women through training and economic opportunity that enhance self-esteem and foster gender equality in the family and the community. UNIFEM is assisting in the planning of communities with and for women so that women and girls can participate more freely and safely. UNIFEM is helping to broaden the space for women's political participation so that women's leadership, as voters, candidates or office holders, will lead to substantive gender equality and the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in all aspects of both the private and public sphere.

We urge the Commission on the Status of Women to incorporate into its final outcomes the invaluable work of UNIFEM, herein cited, as building blocks for further efforts toward the realization of this year's priority theme, "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS."

Altrusa International, Inc.	International Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers	Trickle Up Program, Inc.
Armenian International Women's Association	International Federation of University Women	United States Committee for UNIFEM
Associated Country Women of the World	International Federation of Women in Legal Careers	Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund
Congregation of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd	International Federation of Women Lawyers	World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations
International Association of Women in Radio and Television	Medical Mission Sisters	Zonta International
International Federation of Business and Professional Women	Soroptimist International	

---