

## **Girls' Statement**

55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women  
February 2011

We the girl delegates of the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women hereby recognize the human rights of girls and stand to address the needs, experiences, and concerns of girls both internationally and domestically. We stand to highlight the topics of employment, STEM, education, and violence against girls.

Goretti was a young mother whose husband had her confined to the house. He restricted her access to financial resources and prevented her from pursuing any career opportunities. As her husband had spent the family money on alcohol, she was too poor to send the children to school. She then became part of a micro-lending program in her community, which allowed her to start her own business, provide for her family, and to pay for her children's education.

When girls are given equal access to employment opportunities, they are able to independently provide for their families and themselves regardless of their life situations. This positive model empowers the community counteracting the cycle of poverty. Yet, even in communities where women have employment opportunities a discrepancy still exists. "Women are not the problem, but the solution to issues of global poverty" (Nicholas Kristoff, The Committee on the Teaching of the United Nations, January 14, 2011).

*We demand equal access to employment free of gender discrimination.*

We recognize the impact of an empowering education on girls' access and participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. As women and girls tend to gravitate towards professions they make communal contributions, girls must be informed of STEM's social relevance and integral role in social progress. Women require access to micro-financing and credit initiatives in order to fully pursue all research and development opportunities in STEM professions. Girls need curriculum that emphasizes the importance of both female and male role models in STEM professions including girl-friendly technology courses that increase scientific and technological literacy and provides girls with the opportunity to specialize in STEM subjects in their secondary and tertiary studies.

*We demand that governments and institutions take action in providing tax breaks and other monetary incentives for employers who work to ensure a gender equitable work environment, job opportunities, financial benefits, and access to resources. We recognize the need for paid maternity and paternity leave from employers to allow women to thrive both professionally and personally.*

Education is not an option—it is a human right. We deserve and demand equal access to education. Unsafe conditions, a lack of communal encouragement, and inadequate financial resources result in girls not attending school.

*We demand to keep girls in school through forms of work study programs and organizations financially supporting girls. Money must be directed towards teachers' salaries, school supplies, and the necessary female hygienic items so that girls are not forced to miss school due to menstruation and health issues.*

In some cultures there is a long-lasting belief that the female's place is in the home. Often, a girl gets married and all of her earnings will be transferred to the husband. The girl becomes his property and a financial loss to her family. Societies must invest in girls' education to attain full human rights.

*We demand that women start community forums to express their grievances and offer solutions to those in power. These women in turn can be tangible role models for younger girls in the community. As men and boys are equal partners, we need their support in order to ensure that our plans are effectively carried out.*

Around the world, girls face violence that is supported by their communities. Female genital mutilation, honor killings, and physical punishments are ingrained in certain cultures. It is necessary to work with community leaders to find alternatives to these traditions.

*We demand that governments, communities, and individuals ensure girls an element of choice regarding culturally acceptable acts.*

In times of conflict, girls live in fear of being raped and used as weapons of war. Additionally, many girls are coerced into trafficking based on necessity and a scarcity of economic opportunities in their communities.

*We demand that girls are protected from rape, sexual assault, and human trafficking through increased penalties for perpetrators and rehabilitation and reintegration programs for victims.*

*We represent the leaders of today. Listen to girls, respect girls, educate girls, and empower girls.*