

How to promote women's economic empowerment:

Across the globe, women in today's working sector are seeing it easier and easier to gain access. Yet we should point out that women's access to this realm has a different identity from that of men's. The conditions are generally less safe as well as the compensation offered to women is still largely 75% or less than that of men's. When we look at these two factors it seems that the overall message is that women's work is less valuable than men's, otherwise this disparity would not exist. As a global community, nations need to come together and motivate women as well as men to change these paradigms. There must be a concerted effort to want to change this gender gap. It would appear that the two ways to handle women's economic empowerment is via education and opportunity.

Increasing the educational level of women means that they will have the tools to make decisions about their own lives. Generally higher education levels correspond to higher income brackets. Therefore non-educated women will remain in the seemingly inescapable low education poverty cycle. Yet education in the strictest sense of the world is not the only solution. Women can be educated about business on smaller scales such as in the case of microfinance schemes. Muhammed Yunus, Nobel laureate, has had unbelievable success in this sector with women. In his experience, men not always reliable and sure to pay their debts but women generally are. By educating women about the business sector, national governments as well as organizations are allowing them to use their own talents to improve their lives. Giving people the tools to survive is much more valuable than just giving them money to survive. Furthermore this generation of trained and educated women will be able to educate their children about the skills they have attained from working for themselves; empowering not only women but also their sons and daughters.

Education means a great deal but it means nothing if there are no opportunities for women to exercise what they know. In order for microfinance or any finance to work, there need to be the facilities such as credit bureaus available to ensure this access for women. In addition to financial opportunities, there could be other positions created by national governments to increase female participation in politics. There need to be mentoring programs established by national governments that would promote female political participation. Even developed nations such as Germany and the US have a relatively low level of female representatives in their midst. Future generations will be less than inspired if they do not see positive and proactive female role models. Yet in order to establish such a program there must be recognition that women need help. Since women are primary caretakers, national governments should be care when considering maternity policies. Also, being able to participate in a national government becomes increasing difficult if you are afraid. We can only look to the tragic death of a politician such as Benazir Bhutto just over two years ago to show that there are still many regimes that do not value female participation. If men could also be educated to understand that female business and political empowerment is non-threatening than more women would enter the sector; the more women in politics and business, the higher likelihood that the conditions for women will improve.

In order for MD goals to be realized, women have to be one board. By allowing them to strike out on their own, national governments are extending the olive branch, we just need women to reach out and grab it to help plant the tree.