

TALKING POINTS

Adapted from *From Outrage to Courage: Women Taking Action for Health and Justice*

by Anne Firth Murray

“Being born female is dangerous to your health”

- At the time of birth is already a deadly preference against women: Female infanticide, neglect, differential health care, and sex-selective abortion remain powerful practices that have skewed gender ratios around the world and produced millions of “missing girls.”
 - The number of “missing” girls worldwide ranges from 60 to 100 million girls, about the same number born each year.
 - In most Third World countries, female children suffer from chronic malnutrition at rates higher than do boys, and female fetuses continue to be aborted at higher rates than males.
 - Widespread sex selection has resulted in imbalances between the sexes.
- Young girls (ages 4-12) are more adversely affected by poverty, violence and unequal access to education, than their counterparts.
 - In Africa, literacy levels for women are 52% compared to 70% for men; and in South Asia they are 45% for women compared to 67% in men.
 - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) continues to be prevalent in 28 African countries and a few Asian communities. In Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea its prevalence rate is in the range of 98-100%.
 - 90% of all trafficked domestic workers are girls.
- Adolescent women (ages 10-25) face numerous additional risks as a consequence of the physical, intellectual and emotional changes they undergo in a changing period of their lives.
 - In several African countries (Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda, Liberia, Central African Republic, Cote d’Ivoire and Cameroon) 35% of all women have their first child by the age of 18.
 - In sub-Saharan African, females make up 66% of all youth infected with HIV/AIDS, a figure that is growing.

- Being female puts every woman at risk of being one of many who die while giving birth. Every year, around the world more than 600,000 women die of almost completely preventable illnesses and injuries related to pregnancy and childbirth.
 - More than 50% of women in every country say their last birth was unwanted or mis-timed, confirming an unmet need for contraception.
 - About 70,000 maternal deaths each year are the result of unsafe, illegal abortions.
 - Each minute, a woman somewhere dies from complications related to pregnancy/childbirth, totaling 1,400 deaths a day.

- Violence against women is a universal phenomenon. 1/3 of all women around the world suffer violence from an intimate partner.
 - A study in India found that 45% of all women suffer violence by their husbands.
 - This violence impacts women's health in the short and long term: 56% of all battered women suffer from psychiatric disorders, 37% from depression, and 45% from post-traumatic stress disorder.

- Women's labor includes whatever she is expected to do for no money as well as what she may be coerced into doing in order to have money to care for herself and her family. More than 1/3 of all households around the world depend solely on the labor of women.
 - On average, worldwide, women earn 50% of what their male counterparts do for the same work.
 - A large part of women's work falls outside what is included in official statistics, as "informal" or "unpaid" labor.
 - Globalization and its direct and indirect consequences have worsened the situation, forcing women to earn wages below the national average and exposing them to numerous occupational hazards.
 - Between 600,000 and 800,000 women and children are trafficked each year for sex and labor transnationally.

- Poverty and access ultimately have a disparate impact on women's health which affects every area of their lives, and that of their family and community.

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