

IFUW in Action

2010 - 2013

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**International
Federation of
University Women**

| Foreword

WOMEN GRADUATES ARE WORKING IN MANY COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD through the member federations and associations of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) to help improve the lives of women and girls, who may not have had the same advantages through access to secondary or higher education.

Higher education is the 'key' to a brighter future for women, but is one that is denied to so many girls who do not have the opportunity to go to secondary school. This automatically slams the door closed, thereby denying access to university degrees, or other forms of higher education or training.

Through projects and programmes or raising funds for scholarships, awards and grants, IFUW members are working together on a broad spectrum of activities in countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, countries in the Middle East, Latin America, Europe and in North America. In the following pages you can read about them and see how they are helping to empower women in their local communities. These women may be young women, poor women from rural areas or women who are otherwise marginalised, such as migrant women.

At the international level, through its consultative status at the United Nations, at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and at the International Labour Organization (ILO), IFUW representatives share the needs of these women and the experiences of IFUW members, and advocate for the changes that must be brought about for their empowerment. A different team from IFUW has worked to develop a tool kit on human rights for member federations and associations, which provides references and case histories to boost human rights education in countries.

Through this brief publication you will have an opportunity to learn more about the activities of IFUW members worldwide and to read how they are contributing to addressing the specific problems that face women, whether related to education or gender-based violence, working to ensure that women are fully represented in the highest levels of academia, or providing a young girl from a poor family in a remote rural area with an opportunity that will change her life forever.

Marianne Haslegrave

IFUW President 2010-2013

IFUW works to promote lifelong education for women and girls; promote international cooperation, friendship, peace and respect for human rights for all, irrespective of their age, race, nationality, religion, political opinion, gender and sexual orientation or other status; and advocates for the advancement of the status of women and girls. IFUW encourages and enables women and girls to apply their knowledge and skills in leadership and decision-making in all forms of public and private life.

Lifelong Education for Girls and Women in Many Guises

THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES that the past few years have brought, in particular to girls and women throughout the world, confirm the need for organisations such as the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) at the international level, and national member groups, to continue to play a strong role in advocacy and programme implementation.

To this end, between 2010 and 2013, the Federation and its members have, through the IFUW Programme for Action which guides the organisation's programme activities at the international, national and local levels, focused on core themes:

- Access to Education
- Leadership and Work-Life Balance for Women
- Numeracy, Financial Literacy and Women
- Human Trafficking, Human Rights and Female Migrants
- Bioethics and Women
- Addressing Climate Change
- Munitions and Peacekeeping

EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN INCREASES THE WELL-BEING OF FAMILIES

By the time girls reach the secondary level, enrolment averages only 68.3% worldwide. Achieving a tertiary education is remarkable, with only 36% of women worldwide enrolling in post-secondary programmes. The education that non-enrolled girls and women miss is vital for active economic participation; indeed sometimes for the very health and economic well-being of families. Literacy and numeracy are often required for even entry-level service positions, while advanced education in areas grant women entry to professional fields or provide the skills necessary to become micro-entrepreneurs, successfully start their own businesses or advance up the corporate ladder. Even when fully educated, however, women may face a variety of legal and cultural barriers to economic independence.

Access to Education

ACROSS THE WORLD, IFUW member associations and federations raise funds through donations, sales of academic garments and accessories, partnerships and legacies, then redistribute them to girls and women worldwide, to assist them in secondary, tertiary and continuing education. The **Australian Federation of Graduate Women** (AFGW) provide fellowships, scholarships, bursaries, prizes and other assistance to the value of around Aus\$ 440,000 annually, while actively advocating for fair opportunities for all, in times when funding of education is under threat.

Education is the primary value of IFUW's mission and members, and drives many of the group's programmes internationally, nationally and locally. IFUW's grants and fellowships receive great acclaim, and at the local and national level each member group works to promote education for girls and women through grants and events.

Street children often have no access to formal education, and do not acquire basic reading and writing skills essential to progressing up the social ladder. The **Bangladesh Federation of University Women** (BFUW) runs a literacy project for such children in Dhaka, funded by a Bina Roy Partners in Development (BRPID) grant¹, while the **Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women** (KTUKD) is working closely with SOS International to support poor children in Cyprus. The **Pakistan Federation of University Women** (PFUW) organises training seminars for girls to gain business skills for self-employment, given the high level of unemployment in the country.

A strong barrier to further education is cost - the cost of education itself as well as ancillary costs such as publications, books, and other expenses. The **Bulgarian Association of University Women** (BAUW), through their action in the European *Fragen* project, made gender studies books freely accessible to Bulgarian students.

Women are frequently woefully undereducated about their health and all that this entails. Comprehensive health education is not a part of most national curricula, and many women still rely on traditional knowledge to guide them in health care decision-making. While efforts have been made to improve general knowledge, the resources provided are often inadequate, failing to take into account local languages or practices. In El Salvador, the **Asociación de Mujeres Universitarias de El Salvador** (AMUS) provides child and women's oral and

1. BRPID grants are IFUW grants that support projects empowering women and girls through education and leadership development

general health education in polyclinics. As part of its overall projects to promote education, the **Canadian Federation of University Women** (CFUW) provided funding in excess of Cdn\$ 34,000 for women's education projects in Afghanistan and Nepal, and maternal health care in Zambia.

Over £525,000 have been distributed to graduate and post graduate women by the **British Federation of Women Graduates** (BFWG), through their academic awards and scholarships and as foundation and emergency grants. In Argentina, the **Federación Argentina de Mujeres Universitarias** (FAMU) support women in their study and university careers, while in Korea the **Korean Association of University Women** (KAUW) provides scholarships for college and graduate students. Some 24 women, aged 35 years and older, received scholarships of US\$ 1,650 from the **Israel Association of University Women** (IAUW) to pursue further study and research. The **Irish Federation of University Women** (IrFUW) collected monies to donate to a student welfare fund. The **Kvinnliga Akademikers Forening Sverige** (KAF) manages three foundations, one of which is a grant-giving body that provides grants to female post-graduate medical specialists.

Across the Federation, including by IFUW itself, a total of over US\$ 2.5 million is given away in awards, scholarships and grants annually.

Leadership and Work-Life Balance for Women

IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE AND GLOBALISED LABOUR MARKET, women are finding it difficult to juggle work and family. The **Austrian Verband der Akademikerinnen Österreichs** (VAOE) has carried out research into why there are not more women in leading positions in Austria. Despite efforts such as the Global Board Ready Women, which **IFUW** encouraged actively, many women are still suffering from the glass ceiling, and in some countries cannot even access the formal workplace. For example, the number of women in senior administrative and leadership roles in higher education is too low, given the number of women in higher education jobs in general. The **Norske Kvinnelige Akademikere** (NKA) worked with the equality committee of the University of Bergen on gender equality matters. Instigated by the **British Federation of Women Graduates** (BFWG), other IFUW national federation and associations, including the **Sierra Leone Association of University**

Women (SLAUW), the **South African Association of Women Graduates** (SAAWG) and the **Indian Federation of University Women's Associations** (IFUWA) organised seminars and colloquia on female leadership in higher education as part of the IFUW Colloquia Project, while the **Fiji Association of Women Graduates** (FAWG) actively promoted leadership training.

Leadership positions in particular require managing work-life balance, and the central focus of the **Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund** (DAB) was around women in leadership, partnering with other women's groups across the country. The **Zambia Association of University Women** (ZAUW) made a point of holding an annual ceremony to honor women who had succeeded in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Public speaking is also an integral part of leadership and, like many skills, is something that can be learned. Several national federations and associations ran speaking competitions, called the *Olympes de la Parole*. The project was taken up in various formats by such groups as the **Association française des femmes diplômées de universités** (AFFDU), and the Schweizerischer Verband der Akademikerinnen (unifemmes). The **Irish Federation of University Women** (IrFUW) have a similar project, which they have been running for some years.

Numeracy, Financial Literacy and Women

WHILE NUMERACY IS A CORE SKILL THAT IS LEARNED THROUGHOUT FORMAL EDUCATION, financial literacy may or may not be included in formal education, even in tertiary level courses. When financially literate, women are better able to manage their money and assets as well as to assert their financial rights. Providing even basic financial education on matters such as how to apply for loans or balance a banking account allows women greater control over their money and their livelihood, often offering families a better chance to thrive.

Research by a Monash University team, led by **Australian Federation of Graduate Women** (AFGW) member Dr Helen Forgasz, shows that girls in Australia are still performing at much lower levels in mathematics, and the gap widens as students progress through school. The project included a survey of community attitudes about studying mathematics

at school. It showed that younger people are more likely than older people to believe that boys are better at mathematics than girls, a myth that still pervades many other societies.

In spite of the earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan, the **Japanese Association of University Women** (JAUW) conducted a survey on home economics education from a gender perspective, and organised seminars on work-life balance and financial planning and inheritance. The **Nederlandse Vereniging van Vrouwen met Hogere Opleiding** (VVAO) joined forces with other women's groups in workshops and seminars on financial literacy in the Netherlands. The Mumbai and Calcutta branches of the **Indian Federation of University Women's Associations** (IFUWA) focused on mathematics and financial literacy skills for girls and women, while the Pune branch ran training courses to help women become economically self-sufficient.

The **Scottish Federation of University Women** (SFUW) held a seminar entitled "Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland" at the Scottish Parliament, which was hosted by a Member of the Scottish Parliament who is also her political party's spokesperson for Education. Three speakers from the Scottish Book Trust, Learning and Teaching Scotland and the Literacy Commission addressed the subject from different angles, and a lively discussion followed.

The **University Women's Association (Singapore)** (UWAS) focused on female prison inmates about to be released from prison, and provided them with training on pre-job skills and money management. Furthermore, the association provided sewing training so that ex-prisoners could be employed in the garment and textile industry.

Human Trafficking, Human Rights and Female Migrants

EXPLORATORY WORK ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING was carried out with the Parliamentary services in New Zealand by the **New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women** (NZFGW), revealing that there was a need for much more information and action. Meanwhile in the United States, **Women Graduates USA** (WG-USA) participated in a national call to action to stop trafficking, whether sex or labour trafficking.

The **Georgian Association of University Women** (GAUW) promoted an increase in gender study courses at universities and organised weekly lectures and seminars at their offices to provide extra courses on gender issues for schoolchildren, students and International Displaced Persons (IDPs). The **Suomen Akateemisten Naisten Liitto-Finlands Kvinnliga Akademikers Förbund ry** (FFUW) set up a successful national programme to teach immigrant women to speak, read and write Finnish, thereby improving communication in order to help immigrant women to feel more at home in their local communities.

In collaboration with the Slovenia Peace Institute, the **Rwanda Association of University Women** (RAUW) undertook training on issues such as gender-based violence. The association also held a commemoration for graduate women who died during the genocide. In Sierra Leone, the **Sierra Leone Association of University Women** (SLAUW) ran workshops in 10 different primary and secondary schools in the Western area of the country to sensitise children against the types of violence that affect girls' education.

Many different federations and associations were shocked by the violation of human rights through the violence perpetrated against women worldwide, urging governments to adapt laws and policy to protect girls and women. The **International Federation of University Women** (IFUW), the **Canadian Federation of University Women** (CFUW), the **Federación Española de Mujeres Universitarias** (SFUW), and the **Türk Üniversiteli Kadınlar Derneği** (TUKD) all advocated actively for girls' and women's human rights all over the world and the cessation of violence against women.

Munitions and Peacekeeping

The **New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women** (NZFGW) wrote a letter of commendation to the New Zealand Minister of Disarmament for the overt action taken against cluster munitions in Lao-PDR. **Women Graduates USA** worked with a focus on an implementation strategy of “unarmed civilian peacekeeping” (UCP), a successfully proven model often using women to protect women, and used in internecine conflicts in places such as Sri Lanka, Philippines, South Sudan, South Caucasus and Kyrgyzstan. The organisation also signed on to a Call to Include Gender in the Arms Trade Treaty

drafted by Amnesty International and supported by the Peace Network. At the 2013 Commission on the Status of Women they hosted a well-attended NGO Side Event on Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping.

In order to aid recovery from the effects of war, the **Croatian Association of University Women** (CAUW) worked actively with child and women war and mine victims, and took part in a conference entitled “Victor Quia Victima - Hope for Croatia”.

As political events gained momentum in Egypt, and eager to promote peace, the **Egyptian Association of University Women** (EAUW) focused on meeting with the youth of the revolution, organising two seminars, one on “Security Empowerment” and one on the “Political Situation in Egypt”.

International Women’s Day and International IFUW Day

Celebrated on March 8 and June 1 respectively, International Women’s Day and IFUW Day are high points in the Federation’s calendar. Across the world, IFUW and its member federations and associations celebrate with events, advocacy activities and media visibility.

Both of these days are occasions to remember how much still needs to be accomplished in providing a violence-free, equal rights-based education to all girls and women worldwide. This is the *raison d’être* of IFUW.

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This document represents a snapshot of the activities that the member federations and associations of IFUW have carried out over the years 2010 – 2013. It is based on information that was provided to IFUW and is not a comprehensive portrait of all the varied and interesting activities that they carry out. For more information, please visit the IFUW website (www.ifuw.org), where links to all the member organisations can be found.

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