



International Women's Day, 8 March 2001

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Signatories to the Beijing Declaration in 1995 (at the Fourth World Conference on Women) stated that they were "determined to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity".

Six years later, progress to improve the conditions of women has been uneven and indeed, in some instances, achievements have been reversed. Although no one presumes that the goals stated in Beijing can be achieved overnight, it is worth taking this opportunity to remind ourselves of the immediate and urgent need to move more quickly.

Below I present information about the situation of women with which we may not be quite so familiar. It is not just statistical information, however, for it paints the global picture of vibrant laughing women, strong, capable and able, restricted by oppressive structures and the complicity of silent bystanders.

I hope we can all, both men and women, make International Women's Day on 8 March a day to recommit ourselves to redress this situation both locally and globally.

In Bombay, at five hospitals, of 8000 babies aborted, only one was a male.

In the USA, workplace homicide is the leading cause of workplace deaths for women.

In Bangladesh, 97 per cent of women said they wanted their next child to be a boy.

In Pakistan for a man to be found guilty of rape, there must be four male witnesses.

Genital mutilation is performed in at least 25 countries.

Worldwide, in early 2000, only nine heads of State or Government were women. In 1998, eight per cent of the world's cabinet ministers were women.

In Africa and Asia, in 22 countries, the enrolment ratio for girls is less than 80 per cent that of boys, and girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school.

Worldwide nearly two thirds of the illiterates in the world are women. UNESCO projects that this gap will not decline for women and men over the age of 15 until 2025.

In Africa, a woman's lifetime risk of dying from maternal causes is one in 16 (compared to one in 1400 in Europe).

In Canada, in 1999, women held only 12 per cent of corporate officer positions in the largest 560 corporations, and three per cent of the highest positions there.

In Europe, women's share of administrative and managerial positions is still only 35 per cent.

Worldwide, women now account for almost half of those who live with and who have died from AIDS. Women's risk of becoming infected with HIV during unprotected sex is two to four times that of men.

Happy International Women's Day.