

Let's Go!

Power to Change Fund update | June 2011

Dear Friends,

Thanks to the generosity of friends and supporters, the Power to Change Fund was launched in 2007 with a USD 10 million permanent fund. Every year, interest from the fund has been allocated to support YWCAs in their efforts to lead change in the lives of women, young women and girls around the world. It has resourced country-specific projects, regional leadership training and global advocacy and representation opportunities so that women are able to use their collective power to change and make our world a safer place. It has also leveraged support from many partners committed to advancing women's rights and empowerment.

To date, more than USD 1.5 million has been distributed to over 50 countries through annual Power to Change grant making, which combines the interest from the permanent fund and contributions from many partners. These grants have enabled YWCAs to deliver vital programmes and services that positively impact on the lives of women in the heart of communities.

Over the past year, 40 projects were supported through the Power to Change Fund to a total of USD 770,000, which included USD 125,000 of interest from the permanent fund. An equivalent amount of interest contributed to regional and global leadership initiatives including: training for YWCA leaders in Europe and the Middle East on sexual and reproductive health and rights; and opportunities for members to engage in the International AIDS Conference in Vienna in 2010 and the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2011, grounding our global advocacy voice in the daily realities of women and girls.

The World YWCA would like to acknowledge and affirm the partners and individuals whose regular support enables the Power to Change Fund to have greater impact and outreach to women and girls. Your contributions have made an important difference in the lives of many women in their communities. The most powerful affirmation of this comes from the women who have directly benefited from this support. A young woman from Zambia reports: "Now that I have learnt more on sexual and reproductive health and rights, I know my rights as a woman; I know where to go when I face problems. I have also learnt more about HIV. At first, I used to discriminate against people who are living with HIV ... thinking they deserve to be in such situations because these people have been misbehaving, that is why they are suffering. This is because I did not know how one can contract HIV. After knowing the modes of transmission, I also went for an HIV test and I tested positive." This is just one of the many stories that demonstrate that direct investment in communities brings about change – it enables women to know their rights, to access accurate and life-saving health information and services, and to dispel the pervasive myths, stereotypes and harmful cultural practices at the grassroots level.

Friends, partners and supporters, let us continue to work together so that women have the power to change their lives and communities. Let us use our power to make a difference.



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Access to clean water for communities in Kenya

Imagine not having access to clean water for your daily needs and having to walk many miles every day to fetch water, or not having basic sanitation facilities. This is the daily reality for many women and girls worldwide. Women from the YWCA of Kenya, however, are making clean water a reality for communities in the South Asembo District.

In collaboration with H2O Energies, a volunteer group of Swiss engineers, and with support from the World YWCA Power to Change Fund, the YWCA of Kenya delivers the Koteyo Water Project. This project brings clean, accessible water to homes and schools, and it reduces the burden on women and girls from Nyagoleo and Ahono by improving the access and availability of clean water for domestic and agricultural use.

650 children from Akoum and Rakombe primary schools also benefit from this project. Both of these schools lacked access to clean water and their sanitation facilities were rudimentary. H2O Energies helped to establish a water filtering system and construct a water kiosk for the Rakombe Primary School. The local community was also actively engaged in the project supporting the installation of the system.

The empowerment of women and girls can be achieved in many ways and this is one example: through the provision of water, the YWCA of Kenya has enabled women and girls to access clean water, which has direct health benefits, and to reduce the daily burden of collecting water. The Koteyo Water Project is a shining example of how the P2C Fund and partnership with organisations that share our vision can bring about success, empowering and liberating communities and women and girls.

Advocacy and leadership

Shining the light at CSW

A delegation of over 28 women and young women from the movement gathered in New York city to participate in the fifty-fifth session of the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) from February 22 to March 4, 2011.

This year, the theme for the CSW was access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work. Since its founding, the YWCA has been a leading education and training provider for women around the world, and has played a key role in advocating for equal opportunities for women and girls in education and training, as well as family-friendly labour market policies. The YWCA delegation, therefore, had no problem finding its place at CSW and contributed to the important discussions and negotiations by participating but also organising events.

One such event was a session organised in partnership with Y Global of the YWCA-YMCA of Norway and FOKUS (Norway): 'Women, Education and Peace Building: Implementing UNSCR 1325.' This event brought together women from the YWCAs of Palestine, Sri Lanka and Sudan to share their experiences working in conflict settings. The presentations generated a lively discussion and exchange of ideas, spinning a tapestry that cut across cultural and geographical divides, bringing together common perspectives, issues and challenges that women face in conflict settings.

Eliminating violence against women in Belarus

Violence against women is a daily reality for many women living in Belarus, and survivors of violence rarely seek help or guidance. The Power to Change project of the YWCA of Belarus has focused on improving the capacity of civil society to prevent and identify domestic violence, by raising public awareness, implementing educational strategies, sharing best practices and training.

The project has been implemented at both local and national levels, and activities have taken place in eight cities across the country. Through campaigns such as "My home is free of violence," dedicated to the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, and networking with other national stakeholders on the issue, the YWCA has contributed to raising awareness on domestic violence and gender equality. The association also conducted 53 in-depth interviews with survivors of domestic violence, including men who have perpetrated violence against women. The stories were collected and shared with the wider public in order to break the silence and show the realities of domestic violence.

A one-day training was held in Minsk for 16 YWCA leaders, volunteers, and experts, and a manual for trainers was developed. This resulted in trainers delivering more than 100 sessions in local communities with 326 professionals and 3,000 young people. "The information I received is extremely valuable. I have a better understanding of domestic violence. Teachers have a unique role in prevention – we have to teach children non-violence communication skills. State institutions also have to tackle the root causes of domestic violence," said a school teacher who participated in the training. There is a long way to go in eliminating violence, however the efforts of YWCA of Belarus are mobilising and educating communities towards this outcome.

Enhancing the role of women as peacemakers in Lebanon

The Power to Change project of the YWCA of Lebanon has aimed to foster a culture of non-violence and sustain peace-building in Lebanese communities through the leadership of women and young people in society. The project has sought to promote the role of women as peace-makers and initiators of dialogue by promoting women's leadership and advancing their status as agents of change.

The YWCA of Lebanon organised 30 youth-friendly workshops on gendered social structures, women's human rights, and violence against women, which were conducted in 18 schools across the country. In total 820 students benefited from these workshops. A two-day leadership seminar was held for 15 young women leaders with a focus on women's rights and community building skills. Participants developed an action plan around leadership summer camps to build awareness and leadership on gender issues and violence against women among young people. 18 workshops were organised for 600 students aged 15-17 from all over Lebanon, including those from poor communities. Participants had a rare opportunity to learn about human rights and to explore how gender power relations can lead to violence against women. The workshops offered a safe space where young people were able to talk openly about the issues affecting them.

A seminar on conflict resolution and the role of women in peace building was organised for 48 women focused on bridging religious and political divides, including both Christian and Muslim women. There was an overwhelming community response to the various seminars, with over 600 young people eager to participate as opposed to the 250 that were originally expected, and several schools asking to be included in future programmes. In the words of a participant who attended one of the seminars: "I attended the YWCA seminar on the role of women in building safe spaces. I learnt about the ongoing legislation that will protect women from violence. The seminar helped us to build confidence, independence, self-esteem and self-respect."

Promoting an intergenerational approach was also integral to the World YWCA's involvement in CSW with the hosting of a session in collaboration with Age Esteem, which encourages women to feel good about themselves no matter what age they are. The session explored the concept of intergenerational leadership, showing that at all stages in our life, we have something to offer and something to learn. A great blend of about 44 NGOs participated in this session, each contributing to ways in which intergenerational leadership can be more effective, and discussing common issues such as: violence against women; demystifying language and jargon associated with each generation; and respect for the skills and commitments of different generations. The session left the participants feeling empowered, and in the words of Bonnie Fatio, Goodwill Ambassador for the World YWCA, participants understood that "no matter what age we are, no matter where we are, what issues, what concerns, we are each a shining light. The torch is not only about passing the torch to another, but it is about using our own light to light up others."

The YWCA delegation used CSW as a platform to advocate on priority issues and continue to lift the YWCA's profile as an international advocate on women's rights. The YWCA was a pulsating force in the hallways of the United Nations, and by the end of the two weeks most of the other participants began to recognise this formidable group of women from more than 10 countries representing diverse nationalities, cultures, languages and histories. As World YWCA General Secretary, Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda remarked, "We are all YWCA women leaders, connected by the history of our movement, our commitment to that common purpose so enshrined in our constitution, which is the leadership of women and girls and their collective power towards justice, peace, freedom, human dignity, health and care for the environment. This is who we are."

Women of Ethiopia responds to young women's sexual and reproductive health needs

It is common for women and young women in Ethiopia to have limited or no information on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The YWCA of Ethiopia, therefore, decided to focus its efforts on improving the knowledge and awareness of young women and men to positively influence their attitudes and practices around SRHR and to prevent unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and HIV infection.

With the support of the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the YWCA of Ethiopia organised a six-day training of trainers on SRHR issues for 60 young people from various youth associations and school clubs in Addis Ababa. The training encompassed over 30 different topics, such as the promotion of age appropriate HIV prevention messages, youth-parent dialogues, peer education, communication and life skills, gender based violence (GBV) and coercion, community counselling, outreach and assertiveness. Consequently, the 60 trainers then began training in their respective youth associations and communities.

To date, the training offered by the YWCA of Ethiopia has reached more than 1,000 young women. In addition, age appropriate HIV prevention messages were shared with 4,871 young people; 3,104 young adolescents were given information about GBV; and 1,788 young people were referred for Voluntary Counselling and Testing.

The YWCA of Ethiopia has also established a resource and information centre in one of the public schools, and has scaled-up existing initiatives, such as a football club composed of girls living in the slums of Addis Ababa, which provides a social support system to the girls whom are among the most vulnerable to rights-violations. A forum on SRHR was also organised with high school and university students. HIV prevention information reached over 2,000 young women, improving their knowledge and awareness, and positively influencing their attitudes and practices towards SRHR.



Our donors

The World YWCA would like to acknowledge and affirm the partners and individuals whose regular support enables the Power to Change Fund to have greater impact and outreach to women and girls. Supporting partners over the past year have included:

German Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst - EED); Women's World Day of Prayer, German Committee; Horyzon (Switzerland); the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; the United Nations Development Programme; YWCAs and individuals; and other partners through matching funding to related World YWCA programmes.

The Power to Change Fund is driven by the World YWCA's vision of a fully inclusive world where justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment are promoted and sustained through women's leadership. The Fund invests in the leadership development of women and girls to advance social change around the world, and it strengthens the sustainability of women's leadership by equipping women, young women and girls to respond with knowledge and skills learned through YWCA training and development opportunities.

As we move into the next phase of the Power to Change Fund grantmaking, our efforts are focused on sharing the best practices and lessons learnt over the past four years. The World YWCA Council and International Women's Summit, to be held in Zurich this July on the theme 'Women Creating A Safe World,' provides one such platform with over 1,000 women expected to attend from YWCAs and partner organisations. It is space for us to grow the collective expertise, skills and networks as a global movement focused on women's empowerment, leadership and rights. We hope that you will be able to join us in Zurich for this momentous gathering of women from around the world.

In Zurich, the World YWCA will also launch its strategic framework for the next four years, which seeks to mobilise women's leadership, secure the rights of women and girls and build a strong and cohesive movement. We hope that you will continue to join us as we intensify efforts to promote sexual and reproductive rights, eliminate violence against women and build young women's leadership. Together we can continue to make a difference, together we are strong, and together we have the power to change.

We thank you.

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, General Secretary, World YWCA

Make a donation today

Your continued support is crucial. Please consider additional donations to the Power to Change Fund in one of the following ways:

- **Donate online at www.worldywca.net/donate/**
- **Contact Jane E. Bennett**, World YWCA Director for Finance and Administration :
jane.bennett@worldywca.org | Tel : +41 22 929 60 47
- **Make a donation via bank transfer:**

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