






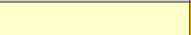

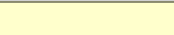


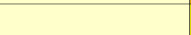

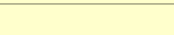


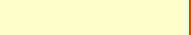














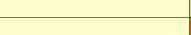














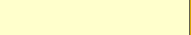







CHALLENGES to WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The topic of the Young Member's Workshop at this year's IFUW conference in Mexico was "The Challenges to Women's Emancipation in the 21st Century". Initially we managed to breakdown this vast subject by prioritizing what we thought could represent the top 10 challenges. We then gauged this with a number of you to come up a definitive list. Then as you may recall we asked all the Young Members to rate to what extent each of these challenges were of concern in their country (1 being a minor issue and 10 being major).

We then created an Empowerment Perception Barometer which we used as a tool to visually reflect your responses per country and IFUW region. When we summarized the results it became evident that 2 issues stood out right across the board. As highlighted in the diagram below:

1. Women's views of themselves and others
2. Women's representation in world politics

As these topics were seen as the main challenges among Young Members in the IFUW regions we decided to make these the subject of our discussions during the workshop. With each topic we first looked at the current situation in our own countries and then tried come up with some actions and solutions to improve the existing state women find themselves in.

Empowerment Perception Barometer Results - July 2010						
Colour code: Minor  Average  Major 						
#	The Challenges to Women's Empowerment in the 21st Century	Africa	Americas	Europe	Middle East	Pacific
1	Equal Rights					
2	Women's access to and choice of adequate healthcare					
3	Education					
4	Financial independence					
5	Women's image of themselves and other women					
6	Religion (fanaticism) versus secularism					
7	The push for diversity versus gender					
8	Women's representation in world politics					
9	Environmental issues (climate change)					
10	The economic crisis					

Women's image of themselves and that of other women

We found that women are often still stereotyped as dependent on men, child carers, or sexual objects. Particularly in the media and socio-cultural groups.

Also women tend to be more critical of themselves and each other than they are of men. This is possibly due to a lack of self-confidence and a frequent perception of other women as "competition".

Overall the participants felt that women should receive more support either from each other or from their family and friends. Also, both boys and girls should be educated in gender, so next generations are more likely to view men and women as equals.

For example, generally men could become more willing to support women by taking up household tasks. With regard to the media, there should be an advocacy to change the way women are portrayed. There needs to be a way of giving feedback on radio and TV

programmes as well as on written (books, magazines, newspapers) plus electronic sources (internet, social media) in order to make others aware of the biased portrayal of women.

In addition it would be helpful if more women friendly traditions are stimulated and spread via the media. Finally, women should learn to accept themselves the way they are and stop judging themselves and other women in terms of their character and looks.

Women's representation in world politics

All participants agreed that there are currently not enough women representing other women in politics. Although this varies greatly across the IFUW regions, women are often still seen as weaker politicians who end up working on "women's issues" or "lighter" portfolios as emancipation and cultural affairs.

Although there are some notable exceptions to this. For example Sheikh Hasina Wazed in Bangladesh, Angela Merkel in Germany, Christina de Kirchner in Argentina, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia, Hillary Clinton in the United States, and Julia Gillard in Australia, to just name a few powerful and leading ladies across the IFUW regions and these women should be more visible as role models.

Generally it was felt that despite some of the negative implications a quota should be introduced along with legal sanctions in order to punish organisations who do not live up to the quota. In addition through mentoring programmes and the support of their family, friends and other women in their organisation or region, women should be encouraged to take up leading positions. Finally, there need to be laws that ensure the development of work/family-life friendly policies which will make it easier for women to participate actively in politics and or working-life in general.

Therefore, although we still have a long way to go, we can start simply by supporting other women instead of seeing them as a threat and educating our children so that they perceive gender differently. Additionally, we should commence changing the way we feel about ourselves. Plus, despite criticism, fight for what we want, as this is the only way we can achieve things!

We have presented the Emancipation Perception Barometer as a measurement tool to the new President of the IFUW board Marianne Haslegrave. It is our intention to refine the Barometer and to continue to gauge the perceptions of our Young Members on an ongoing basis. Needless to say we will be counting on your input and participation over the coming months and years.

In case you have any questions or comments, please contact us via youngmembersreply@hotmail.com.