



ACTION ALERT

The Global Resources and Opportunities for Women to Thrive (GROWTH Act)

The GROWTH Act Addresses Gender Equality

Investing in women's economic opportunity is the best way to end world hunger and end the global economic crisis. On July 9, 2009, the Global Resources and Opportunities for Women to Thrive (GROWTH) Act (**S. 1425**) was introduced in the U.S. Senate. The GROWTH Act is an innovative bill that would give millions of women the tools they need to lift themselves and their children out of poverty.

The GROWTH Act aims to eliminate the barriers that keep families poor by addressing specific areas:

- **Small Business Development and Training:** Help women living in poverty start and grow their own businesses, by creating credit for micro-finance loans
- **Property Rights:** Help increase women's land and property rights.
- **Improved Wages and Working Conditions:** Help improve women's wages and working conditions in poor countries by emphasizing training and education.
- **Access to Global Trade:** Ensure that increased trade benefits women and families living in poverty.
- **Strengthening Local Women's Organizations:** Encourage U.S. agencies to recognize women and to work with local organizations that focus on women's needs.

Why Economic Opportunities for Women?

Investing in women is the surest way to end global poverty. In many poor countries, women produce the majority of the food supply and are more likely to spend their income on food, education and healthcare for their children. However, they face unequal barriers to lifting their families out of poverty: women often work longer hours in the lowest-paid sectors, earn less stable incomes, and receive less training and have fewer economic opportunities than men.

The GROWTH Act would enable the U.S. to play a positive role in the economic betterment of the poorest women and their families. It emphasizes training and education programs that would allow women to access better quality jobs. It also tackles legal and structural barriers like the fact that women most often do not own property, including the land they farm, and have difficulty accessing local, regional and global markets for their products.

“There is a critical link between improving the lives of women and eradicating global poverty,” said Senator Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, the lead Democratic sponsor. “The GROWTH Act will not only empower women



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by giving them the financial tools to start and grow their own businesses, it will create broader opportunities through educational, legal, and community building programs.” Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, the lead Republican sponsor said, “Here in America, we’ve shown that empowered women can be some of our most successful business and civic leaders and catalysts for progress in their communities.”



It's amazing how far investing in women can go in reducing poverty in entire families and communities. Take the case of Simantoi Kilama, a woman from a Maasai tribe in Kenya who, with hard work, determination, and economic opportunity, is now providing for herself, her family, and school children in her community with the income she earns as a nurse. To hear Simantoi's story, go to: http://www.womenthrive.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=400&Itemid=99999999

Why Is Changing U.S. Policy Important?



As the largest economy in the world, a powerful trading partner, and major international donor, the U.S. can have a major impact on the lives of women worldwide. By improving our policies, we can help millions of mothers, daughters, and sisters around the world escape poverty. Shade Bembatoum-Young, a woman who has dedicated her life to helping disadvantaged Nigerian women start and grow their own businesses, understands the potential of U.S. policy. In 2006 she traveled all the way from Nigeria and spoke at a Congressional event on the GROWTH Act. To learn more about Shade's story, visit: http://www.womenthrive.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=413&Itemid=99999999

The GROWTH Act is supported by Women Thrive Worldwide (formerly the Women's Edge Coalition), a collaborative partner of the Women's Division Washington Office of Public Policy. More information can be found at www.womenthrive.org/growthinfo



Write or call your Senators and ask them to co-sponsor the GROWTH Act (S. 1425)!

Read the Book of Resolutions, which states, “The United Methodist Church must lead the way by valuing the comparable work and worth of women in our churches, agencies, and related entities, and by championing such things as affordable child care and health care, pay equity, financial aid, and educational support for single women in Africa.” (See BOR 2008 #3443, page 522).

In many poor countries, women produce the majority of the food supply and are more likely to spend their income on food, education, and health care for their children. However, women also face unequal barriers to lifting their families out of poverty. The GROWTH Act would work to address those obstacles.