

adolescents, single, and married adult women, and elderly women. No strata of society is immune from the epidemic of violence. Selective amniocentesis is a common practice in some parts of the world, a violent form of discrimination against the girl child. In parts of South Asia, the under-five-year-old girl child mortality rate is five times higher than the under-five year old boy child mortality rate. This is closely linked to inadequate feeding and lack of health care for the devalued girl child.

Incest, child pornography, the selling of the girl child into prostitution, and early arranged marriages are settings for abuse and torture. Bride burning, rape, female genital mutilation, and emotional battering are further examples of common abuse experiences of women.

Physical abuse has been documented in one out of every six pregnancies in the United States except when the expectant mother is an adolescent, in which the abuse rate is one out of every three pregnancies. The abused victim learns to expect battering and to blame herself for its occurrence until it breaks her spirit. Violence against women is frequently a hidden sin but it is a direct violation of Christ-centered behavior. As such, tolerance of abuse within the church is a denial of Christ.

Ministry Ideas: Abuse education seminars • Women's shelters • Support groups • Healing seminars •

6 Illiteracy (Education/Literacy Level)

Globally, lack of education and illiteracy is widespread with wide disparity between affluent and poor countries. Even in affluent countries, overall girls receive less education and training than boys. In Sub-Saharan Africa and areas of South Asia as few as 5-8% of the women have basic reading skills. Yemen leads the world in female illiteracy with 3% of the women able to read.

Illiteracy is powerfully linked to low social status, poverty and poor health. Lack of literacy skills traps women into the cycle of poverty with limited options for economic improvement, sentencing their children to chronic poverty and limited education and training opportunities. Frequently the only "skill" a poor woman has to support

her children is to sell herself. When sex becomes a bargaining chip for daily bread and ignorance blocks opportunity to escape from poverty, the soil is fertile for the pandemic of AIDS.

Lack of female literacy is also closely associated with increased infant and child mortality and illness. If the children are to live and to thrive, the mother must be given a lamp unto her feet—the skill of literacy. Further, illiterate women are blocked from reading the word of God. This barrier cripples their spiritual growth and in the spiritual training of their children.

Ministry Ideas: Basic literacy • GED tutoring • English as a Second Language • Computer literacy •

How You Can Get Involved

- be sure there is a WM in your church
- tell the leader you want to be involved
- pray for those who are suffering from these challenges in a hurtful way
- pray for leaders who can make a difference
- contribute time and money to programs in your church and abroad
- take leadership training and make a difference
- form friendships with women in different cultures
- educate other people as to the issues that challenge women

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."



Department of Women's Ministries
General Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA
301-680-6608
womensministries@gc.adventist.org
<http://wm.gc.adventist.org>



Six Challenge Issues Facing Women

The woman stood before God, her heart breaking from the pain and injustice in the world.

"Dear God," she cried out, "look at all the suffering, the anguish and distress in the world. Why don't you send help?"

God responded, "I did send help. I sent you."

In Women's Ministries we have found that there are six primary challenge issues facing women, obstacles to being all that the Creator God made them to be. These issues affect women in and out of the Church, sometimes with equal intensity. They impact women in all countries of the world, although often to different degrees.

Challenges can be opportunities for outreach and witness—they help define many of the needs women face. We present these six challenges to you and suggest some possible ministries that you can build from these needs. Be creative. What can you do in your church and community to minister to these needs.

1 Threats to Health (poor health status)

Poor health undermines a woman's ability to be a fully productive participant in God's work. Globally, the health of women is deteriorating. This process is closely aligned to environmental deterioration, declining agricultural productivity, and social demands on women, particularly in poor countries. In many parts of the world, the devalued social status of being born female sentences the woman to less claim on food and health care.

Fifty percent of all poor women and two-thirds of pregnant poor women in less developed countries are anemic. Maternal mortality remains the leading cause of death among women globally. One-half million women die each year from childbearing related complications. For every one that dies, twenty are physically damaged in the process of giving life. Maternal mortality has been called the "silent epidemic." Other threats include osteoporosis, depression, lack of nutritional training, reproductive health education, breast and other cancers associated with the reproductive system.

Ministry Ideas: Breathe Free for Women • Blood pressure/cholesterol programs • Osteoporosis prevention • Aerobics • Weight control • Vegetarian cooking • Nutrition classes • Cancer screening • Reproductive health classes • Grief and loss support groups • Divorce support groups • Stress reduction

2 Length of Workday (A Woman's Workload)

Women in poorer countries routinely work 18 hours per day. In some parts of the world, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, women do 90% of all the agricultural work. Frequently expected to perform a full day's paid work for the financial viability of the family, a woman then faces additional hours of daily housework and child care, often with limited access to basic necessities of fuel and water. In many parts of the world, women have no voice in the distribution of family funds to which they have contributed.

In the affluent world, the long working day also affects women with heavy expectations for job performance while maintaining family integrity. Balancing the societal expectations for maintaining an intact and healthy family while achieving in a highly competitive work environment results in long days and limited rest and recreation. Literature on women's health identifies chronic fatigue syndrome as a growing phenomena among women in both poor and affluent countries.

Ministry Ideas: Time management • Organization seminars • Management classes • Self esteem •

3 Poverty (Economic Standing)

According to the 1993 State of the World, the richest 25% of the world's population absorbs 90% of the resources. Among the poorest people in the world are women. Poverty is increasingly a feminine social disease. According to the International Labor Organization of the United Nations, women who globally represent 50% of the world's population, do 2/3s of the world's paid and unpaid work, earn 10% of the money in the world and own 1% of the world's property. Feminine poverty is related to four key factors:

- global deterioration in the economy
- migration from rural to urban areas due to environmental degradation and declining soil fertility resulting in hunger
- global conflict resulting in refugee movements, most,

of which are women and children; and

- widespread female head of household status

It is estimated that 1/3 to 1/2 of all households worldwide are headed by women, a major risk factor for poverty as women overall simply do not make as much money as men. The poverty cycle tightens for poor women who have limited education, limited job opportunities, and responsibility for growing children without sufficient resources.

Ministry Ideas: Small enterprise development • Money management seminars • Preparing for retirement seminars • Professional mentoring • Time management • Budgeting • Widow support groups • Debt reduction •

4 Lack of Training, Mentoring, and Opportunities

Opportunities for women in leadership and advancement are difficult for women in almost all areas of the world, in business, in government, and in the Church.

Historically, leadership in the Adventist Church has been provided for by the pastorate. Through experience on church, conference, and union boards and committees, these pastors learned how the church conducted business and became comfortable in leadership. Most women have not had the advantage of this type of experience and training. Therefore, as women move into positions of leadership, most need specialized training.

As the church looks to more inclusiveness and balance in leadership and on committees and boards at all levels, more lay persons, including women, are taking their places in these groups. These individuals need training and mentoring.

Ministry Ideas: Leadership training • Mentoring • Communication classes • Parliamentary procedures seminars • Women's Ministries committees

5 Abuse (In all it's forms)

Domestic violence, incest, rape, and battering are all too common burdens that women carry. Physical, sexual and psychological battering happens to small girls,