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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by International Brain Education Association Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The International Brain Education Association Foundation has analysed the priority theme of the Commission on the Status of Women's 60th session: "Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development".

It is The International Brain Education Association Foundation's belief that the root of our global problems lies in the human brain, and in the brain, lie the answers; women's and girls' issues are no exception.

Nearly all of our brains are developed before we are even born. Our brains are never more pure than at the moment of birth. As newborns, we know nothing of race, religion, socioeconomic class, gender, or any other identity boundary. All of us simply are, uninfluenced by the many man-made distinctions and societal roles. But as we develop language and start interacting with our environment, we establish our differences, including gender differences.

Even though male and female brains may show structural, biochemical and functional differences, the human mind does not perceive these differences. We see one another as human beings. That is why we have to move beyond those apparent differences and work together for our brain's shared goals of health, happiness and peace within individuals and societies.

Out of 1,000 people, 504 are men (50.4 per cent) and 496 are women (49.6 per cent). Constituting roughly half of our world's population, women are key driving forces of our societies. Vulnerable and disadvantaged women and girls and those who experience multiple forms of discrimination and inequalities of any kind should be empowered if we are to achieve the United Nations goals of sustainable development.

The International Brain Education Association Foundation recommends placing emphasis on three main areas for women's and girls' empowerment towards sustainable development: 1) Health, 2) Education and 3) Cultures of Peace. The brain and body are fundamentally connected. That is why we suggest taking a holistic approach to all these topics, one that focuses on the importance of women's and girls' mindset towards themselves and their lives.

Health

The International Brain Education Association Foundation welcomes Sustainable Development Goal #3 to "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages". Women are prone to particular illnesses and health problems related to sexuality and giving birth. With one woman dying during pregnancy or childbirth every 90 seconds, the global maternal mortality rate is still unacceptably high, and so is the death rate of newborns and children under 5.

We suggest taking care of women's and girls' health in a preventive, proactive, and natural manner. Together with measures that improve their access to proper health care, and provide better health services, there needs to be an effort to educate women and girls on how to effectively manage their health by themselves. Although it is not the ultimate solution, there is a lot one can do to increase her awareness of body and mind and take care of herself to prevent illness and to endure moments when the body is required to make a stronger effort — such as during childbirth. In countries where The International Brain Education Association Foundation has

worked, we have documented success in prevention of operations; reduction of levels of blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol; and improved stress management in 90 per cent of our women beneficiaries, simply by enhancing their body and brain awareness and helping them focus on themselves for 4 hours a week.

Education

The International Brain Education Association Foundation welcomes Sustainable Development Goals goal #5 to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. As stated in the underlying facts, one third of the countries in developing regions have not yet achieved gender parity in primary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia, girls still face barriers to entering both primary and secondary school.

Improving girls’ access to schools is important, but also important is improving their levels of motivation to do well in school and to continue pursuing education. When it comes to staying in school, women are more likely to drop out because of the gender bias and the widespread pressure put on girls and women to take care of their families. In this regard, it is important to focus on enhancing their confidence and motivation, as well as other emotional factors. In schools worldwide, there is too much emphasis on academic results, which is detrimental to emotional management. In fact, emotional regulation, according to recent studies, may very well be at the foundation of good academic performance. In order to reach good levels of achievement, we have to treat female students holistically and deal with stress levels, growing numbers of depression and other mental disorders, increased bullying occurrences and the root causes of poor attendance and/or drop outs.

In countries where we have projects, The International Brain Education Association Foundation has documented an increased level of academic motivation among girls. By developing their brain and body awareness and paying attention to their inner selves, they naturally start to reveal their passion for growth and development as well as their strength to invest in their education despite social and economic hardship.

Cultures of Peace

The International Brain Education Association Foundation welcomes Sustainable Development Goal #16, particularly its reference to the “Promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development”.

Many of the victims of violence around the world are women, who experience domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse. Preventing and combating all forms of violence against girls and women is fundamental. But actively creating cultures of peace might be, The International Brain Education Association Foundation believes, a more sustainable approach to eradicating these forms of violence.

Creating cultures of peace does not happen overnight. It needs nurturing and focused attention; it means educating for peace and spreading the value that a peaceful inner mindset brings to our communities and nations. Through its projects, The International Brain Education Association Foundation has experienced a reduced number of violent incidents against girls in schools where incidents were previously high. Some of the main reasons for violence are mental illness and

heightened levels of stress and tension. Numerous studies have shown that when people learn to manage their mental imbalances and their stress, they are generally less prone to violence. When this level of self-responsibility is nurtured through education and mentoring, eventually people are able to develop a peaceful mindset and naturally start to create peace in their families and communities.

Role Models

The International Brain Education Association Foundation suggests identifying all those girls and women, often times hidden, who are heroes in their homes and their communities; women who are thriving forces because of their strength, integrity of character, and determination to make this world a better place. Through these living examples, we can help many other girls and women who might feel like their dreams are too hard to reach. It is our hope that more empowering stories emerge as we work together to create more opportunities for women, and that their voices can be heard in the United Nations and government forums.

Conclusion

What we suggest is for women and girls to be made aware of the great value of their brain as our human common denominator and life source, and of their body as having a unique purpose and role in society. If more people acknowledge this value and apply it, we'll witness more gender balance and advance the United Nations goals of development and peace.

The International Brain Education Association Foundation is thankful to the Commission on the Status of Women for providing the opportunity to give our viewpoint, and asks the Commission on the Status of Women to consider including these recommendations in its 60th session.
