

## LESSON 5

### Women and Development in South America

Studies show that women are key to economic development of a country. As women make gains in health care, education, and labor, it results in raising the standard of living for communities as a whole.

In this lesson, students will examine the role women play in development in South America. By analyzing a United Nations report on development, students will come up with goals and actions to increase the status of women.

### Objectives

Students will

- Read and analyze primary documents
- Examine a United Nations study on the role of women in relation to development
- Create goals and actions to increase development in South America

### Standards Addressed

- Understand that investment in factories, machinery, new technology, and in the health, education, and training of people can raise future standards of living
- Understand the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface

### Materials

- “True or False? Women and Development” handout
- “Women and Development” handout
- “Solutions to Increase Development” handout

## Procedure

### 1. Discuss the concept of development.

Ask students what development is:

- What is a developed country?
- What factors make a country more or less developed?
- Which countries are less developed?
- Which ones are more developed?

Development is the improvement in a country's economic and social systems (including better health care, educational systems, GDP, and more).

### 2. Discuss the status of women and development.

Distribute "True or False? Women and Development." Have students complete the true/false questionnaire. When they are finished, discuss their answers. All of these statements are taken from the United Nation's study, "State of the World Population 2002." All of the statements are TRUE.

Discuss with the students that standards of education, health, and labor reflect the level of development. Some of the statistics from "True or False? Women and Development" reflect an increase in overall development in areas of South America, while others show a disparity between genders and the rich and poor.

### 3. Read about the role of women in development of South America.

Distribute "Women and Development." Divide students into pairs. Have the students read the selections from the United Nation's study on development.

### 4. Brainstorm policies targeting women.

In partners, have students come up with one goal and corresponding specific actions to take to improve the status of women in the three areas of workforce, health, and education. Challenge them to be as specific and creative as they can.

Share their answers with the class. Make a list of the class goals as well as actions. Are there any goals that were left out? Are there other ways that countries could accomplish these goals?

### 5. Study the approach of South American countries to include women in development goals.

Distribute "Solutions to Increase Development." Go over the goals and specific actions that South American countries have already begun to take to increase development.

## True or False? Women and Development

### Directions

For each statement below, decide if the statement is true or false. Write a “T” by the true statements and a “F” by the false statements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ More women than men live in poverty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Worldwide, over half of women’s total work time is spent on unpaid work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Of the developing countries women marry younger in South Asia and at older ages in Latin America.
- \_\_\_\_\_ In many developing countries women are responsible for agricultural production and market work as well as unpaid, non-market work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Globally, the “gender gap” in education has narrowed over the last decade.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reducing gender inequality can accelerate economic growth and have a powerful impact on poverty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ In several Latin American countries school enrollment rates for girls aged 6-14 exceed those for boys.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Malaria, tuberculosis, and sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS are more common among the poor; young women are especially vulnerable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ In Argentina, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela the number of girls finishing primary school is higher than the number of boys.
- \_\_\_\_\_ In Latin America the percentage of people living on less than a dollar a day has decreased from 1987 (15.3%) to 1998 (12.1%).
- \_\_\_\_\_ In Colombia a higher percentage of births are with skilled attendants (such as midwives, nurses, doctors) than in the U.S.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence shows that large families and rapidly growing populations hold back development.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Women work longer hours than men in nearly every country. In the developing countries women account for 53% of the total burden of work.

Excerpts taken from the United Nations Report: State of the World Population 2002.  
People, Poverty, and Possibilities: Making Development Work for the Poor.

## Women and Development

Women are important to development because women generally bear the primary responsibility for families worldwide (raising children, feeding the family, maintaining the home). Thus, as women make gains in health care, education, and labor, the standard of living for the entire family tends to rise. Three key areas in which to advance development are:

1. Women and the workforce
2. Women and health (including reproductive health)
3. Women and education

### Directions

Read the following selections on women and workforce, health, and education matters. The information provided is from The United Nations Report: State of the World Population 2002. For each section:

- Write one goal to improve the lives of women and increase development.
- Explain how to achieve that goal and what actions to take.

#### Women and the Workforce

Goal

Specific Actions To Achieve The Goal

#### Women and Health (including reproductive health)

Goal

Specific Actions To Achieve The Goal

#### Women and Education

Goal

Specific Actions To Achieve The Goal

## Women and Development

### Excerpts taken from **The United Nations Report: State of the World Population 2002. People, Poverty and Possibilities: Making Development Work for the Poor**

The empowerment and autonomy of women, and the improvement of their political, social, economic, and health status, constitutes an important end in themselves and one that is essential for achieving sustainable development.

—International Conference on Population and Development 1994

### Women and the Workforce

Women do a wide range of paid and unpaid work, in the home and outside of it. Much of this work is in the informal economic sector, meaning it is not included in national accounting systems. As a result, the women who do this work miss out on important employment benefits that may exist, such as health insurance and paid time off. This invisibility translates into incapacity: what countries do not count, they do not support...

In many developing countries women are responsible for agricultural production and market work as well as unpaid, non-market work... Recent time-use surveys show that at least half of women's total work time is spent on unpaid work... When time spent on home production is included in the computation, women contribute 40 to 60 percent of household income... This has implications for investments in the next generation. If parents view daughters as less likely to take paid work or earn market wages, they may be less inclined to invest in their education, women's fastest route out of poverty...

More women are taking paid work in industry and services. But entering the labor market can leave women poor in both time and money. They work double days, at work and at home. They often earn less than men for the same work, and have less opportunity to improve their skills...

Poor women do more unpaid work, work longer hours and accept degrading working conditions during these times of crisis, just to ensure that their families survive.

### Women and Health (including reproductive health)

Throughout much of the world, families and societies treat girls and boys unequally, with girls disproportionately facing privation, lack of opportunity, and lower levels of investment in their health, nutrition, and education. Gender based discrimination continues in adolescents and is often a constant feature of adulthood.

For reasons of biology, gender, and cultural norms, women are more susceptible than males to HIV infection... among women, the peak age of HIV prevalence tends to be around 25, 10 to 15 years younger than the peak age for men.

Reproductive health is a lifelong concern. A mother's reproductive health status has an impact on her children and their health... Adverse reproductive health outcomes in later adolescence, including unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), can be ascribed to conditions such as lack of education and opportunity... Unwanted pregnancies put further strain on women's health. Infection and injury associated with pregnancy and childbirth decrease women's productivity and quality of life.

Rates of maternal mortality show a greater disparity between rich and poor nations than any of the

other commonly used public health indicators, including infant mortality rates. A woman's lifetime risk of dying due to maternal causes (pregnancy, delivery, and related complications) is one in 188 in Latin America [compared to one in 2,976 in more developed countries].

...Young people themselves do not put sexual and reproductive health high on their list of active concerns. But reproductive health is connected to many of their top-line issues, such as completing education, finding employment, securing their economic position, making secure relationships, and eventually, founding a family of their own.

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## Women and Education

Education is a key for breaking the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next... Although overall access to basic education has risen substantially over the last decade in many developing countries, the poor are still less likely ever to attend school, less likely to be currently attending school, and more likely to repeat grades than those who are wealthier. Most young people have some access to schooling opportunities, but the picture is very mixed: 115 million children currently do not attend primary school, fifty-seven percent of them girls... Ninety-six million young women aged 15–24 in developing countries cannot read or write. Illiteracy excludes young people from a wide range of opportunities.

In many developing countries, fewer than half of all children continue as far as secondary school. Education statistics show a sharp drop-off in girls' attendance after primary school. By age 18, girls have received an average of 4.4 years less education than boys.

While the "gender gap" in education has narrowed over the last decade, the relative disadvantage still keeps girls from enrollment in secondary education. There are large variations among countries, with one of the widest gaps in Latin America...

Gender disparities within countries are often greater among the poor, and in some countries continue among the poor after they have disappeared in wealthier groups, so to be a girl from a poor family is a double disadvantage. Poor parents may be unwilling to educate girls because they believe that girls will never earn as much as boys. Their labor is needed immediately to support the family, help with household chores and care for younger siblings. Poor communities where women's role is limited often do not believe that a girl needs formal education to be a wife and mother...

Pregnancy can also lead to girls dropping out of school... Education is also strongly linked to better reproductive health for women... Educated women marry later, begin childbearing later, and have fewer children than uneducated women... One study found that an additional year of female education reduced total fertility by 0.23 births...

Education and employment opportunities have direct and important indirect impacts on life quality, including health, and prospects for development. They are particularly important for adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights. Both allow girls and young women to gain knowledge, self-understanding, self-esteem and skills, and to earn an income. They also offer a chance to develop relationships with peers and adults outside their families, potentially important sources of information that can open up new opportunities beyond early marriage and childbearing.

## Solutions to Increase Development

After completing the “State of the World Population” study, the United Nations came up with goals and suggested actions to accomplish these goals. Below are ideas the United Nations suggested to increase development as well as specific examples of how South American countries are dealing with these issues.

### Recommendations

- **Cooperation:** Cooperation among governments, communities, the private sector, and the international community must coordinate to make the best use of limited resources.
- **Integration:** Integration of pre- and post-natal care, safe delivery, family planning and prevention of sexually transmitted infections must increase to make the reproductive health package more effective.
- **Empowerment:** Empowerment of women must be increased by granting small loans through microcredit arrangements.
- **Education:** Education must be universal, especially for poor girls. This should include special efforts to avoid unwanted pregnancy and HIV infection. Better education helps women to protect their own health, as well as their children’s, and widens economic choices.
- **Programming:** Programming must be directed to reach the poor by reducing costs to the poor, giving the poor a voice in the design, providing public assistance, and improving the quality of services.

### Specific Actions Taken in South America

- **Health sector reform in Brazil:** Brazil’s unified health system, established in 1988, has a basic care package that includes family planning, reproductive health and STD/HIV prevention and treatment.
- **Health sector reform in Colombia:** Reform of Colombia’s health system has led to more financial resources for health care, with an emphasis on more efficient use of resources, broad-based support for health promotion and prevention care, and special attention to underserved groups. All of these sector-wide trends have had positive impacts on the delivery of reproductive health services in Colombia.
- **Literacy for the indigenous poor in Bolivia:** An innovative project addresses both issues, by providing simultaneous literacy training in the indigenous Quechua language and Spanish, and information on reproductive health, health insurance, and safe motherhood. Between 1999 and 2002, over 100,000 women and men learned to read and write.
- **Microcredit in Bolivia:** Pro Mujer is a micro-finance program which loans money to companies run by women who work on family planning options, child nutrition, and health.