



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Fifty-fifth session**

22 February-4 March 2011

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives**

### **Statement submitted by To Love Children Educational Foundation International, 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.

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\* E/CN.6/2011/1.



## **Statement**

### **A scholar-practitioner approach to the feminization of leadership**

1. Women have made a lot of progress over the past 30 years in being accepted as global leaders. This was achieved by building alliances at the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing+5 review) in 2000, and advocating for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. To Love Children wants to build on this progress and develop a cross-cultural communication framework to close the workplace leadership gap that presently excludes females.

2. To Love Children is developing a new gender model that will include a transdisciplinary approach that integrates human rights, culture, classical leadership theory, gender equality, gender justice, and intercultural communication skills. The purpose is to have a working gender assessment tool as the basis for developing intercultural communication skills in women leaders. The framework also serves as a leadership evaluation tool with which to measure women's cross-cultural communication proficiency. Women in the twenty-first century have to cope with global issues that affect their nations. Although leadership traditionally has been premised on a masculine theoretical foundation, today women have to adapt to male-oriented solution-based policies on issues such as gender justice, human rights, democratic governance, peace, education, health, clean water, gender equality, and how to hold discussions with intercultural yet still mainly male collaborators.

### **Justification for women leadership**

3. To Love Children posits that a balanced, feminist leadership methodology would gain advantage from a cross-cultural and transdisciplinary approach that includes effective cross-cultural communication training for women. Education for women requires a leadership curriculum that includes a parallel track for women-leadership pedagogy. In order to create women leaders, there is a need for a new method of leadership instruction that takes account of gender. Culture has had greater weight than gender in measuring a leader's performance. Many researchers support the view that the culture of a nation determines how a leader behaves.

### **Theory and practice**

4. New, progressive leadership research has been redefining theoretical perspectives based on a posteriori evidence on culture and gender along with new research on transformational theory. How would a women's framework that integrates and adapts to competence in cross-cultural communication benefit from recent scholarship and practice?

5. The online discussion of women in leadership roles hosted by WomenWatch in 2007 centred on three major themes. The first was the status of women in leadership positions globally, the second focused on factors that influence women's access to decision-making positions in the judiciary and the public and private sectors, and the third on factors that influence such access from the perspectives of the media, academia, civil society, trade unions and other professional organizations. Supported by data, the participants in the WomenWatch's discussion noted the small gains that

women leaders had achieved and cited evidence of a global gender imbalance in leadership. It was agreed that no nation had yet achieved an environment in which women had equal prospects for leadership.

6. There is a solid basis for a theoretical foundation for a gender-equilibrium leadership theory that could include collaborative leadership. The way forward to achieving gender equality may be a collaborative approach, where necessary. In 2000, Alvino E. Fantini explained that “intercultural communicative competence” was important in order to develop the skills and abilities necessary for a female to become an effective leader. Fantini understood that leaders needed to meet the challenge of increased diversity of the groups that are now interacting globally. Competence in leadership, as defined by Fantini, transcended leadership theory.

7. The cross-cultural communication framework put forward by To Love Children is built on Fantini’s seven principles of “intercultural communicative competence”: behavioural traits, five dimensions of awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge, language proficiency and a developmental process of learning. Fantini’s philosophy provided an adaptable and formal learning tool to inform a structure for the cross-cultural communication framework for women leaders presented in this paper.

#### **A cross-cultural communication framework for women leaders**

8. Research conducted by Payne, Fuqua and Canegami in 1997 examined the utility of training women leaders to be on a par with men leaders. Their premise was that women need the same communication skills as men. To Love Children’s underlying supposition for achieving success in this regard is the application of a cross-cultural communication framework for women.

#### **Implications for social change**

9. Social change in this context, irrespective of gender, assumes an ability to effectively conduct a discourse on issues among many different constituents, actors and stakeholders, regardless of bias or cultural stereotypes.

#### **Opportunity for social change**

10. Social change may be produced by women whether they are followers or leaders. The literature suggests that leadership theory is now looking at both Western and non-Western perspectives and cultures. There is at present a need for an investigation to find a grand theory of leadership that offers women greater opportunity to become effective leaders through a synthesis of leadership theories and ideas.

11. The opportunity for social change also means the ability to develop skills, talents, new leadership experiences and gender equality. The achievement of gender-oriented social change is dependent on women becoming effective at cross-cultural communication.

#### **Conclusion**

12. A cross-cultural communication self-assessment tool offers women leaders the opportunity to critically analyse their strengths and weaknesses. In 2005, J. M. Burns understood the potential benefit of the integration of many disciplines to inform

leaders in the twenty-first century. Women leaders need to be able to first assess how well they communicate before selecting a leadership theory to emulate. The achievement of gender equality requires women who can effectively express ideas, concepts and policy recommendations in all cultures.

13. In 2009, Avolio, Mhatre, Norman and Lester assumed that similarities as well as any differences in gender traits were important in developing leaders. Leadership development needs to be based on Oliver Wyman's "congruence model" in order to best integrate gender, culture, human rights and classic leadership research into a gender approach for the assessment of women's leadership skills.

14. Women leaders should encourage scholars to conduct more research on cross-cultural communication frameworks to integrate into leadership theory applicable to a broad range of situations, including local communities in developing countries. The research question should focus narrowly on selected barriers to gender equality and examine the factors that contribute to or detract from gender equilibrium.

#### **Recommendation**

15. A self-assessment tool designed to measure a woman's cultural communication competency, knowledge and skills should be developed.

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