



## Wonca's 10 Steps to Gender Equity in Health

Prepared for Wonca and its member organizations,  
by the Wonca Working Party on Women and Family Medicine  
McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 24 August 2006

**“Sixty years have passed since the founders of the United Nations inscribed, on the first page of our Charter, the equal rights of men and women. Since then, study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health-including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. And I would also venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended. But whatever the very real benefits of investing in women, the most important fact remains: Women themselves have the right to live in dignity, in freedom from want and from fear.”**

-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, UN Commission on the Status of Women (from UNFPA report on The State of World Population 2005.

In the past decade, Wonca joined the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and other influential international bodies in recognizing gender as a key determinant of the health of individuals and their societies. Wonca, whose mission is to improve the quality of life of the peoples of the world, endorsed the Beijing Platform for Action in Durban in 2001, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Singapore in 2001, both strong declarations of the critical need for the empowerment of women to achieve optimal health and quality of life.

Two of the eight MDGs, to be achieved by 2015, speak directly to women's experiences: “empowerment of women and promotion of equality between women and men”, and “reduction of maternal mortality by three quarters”. The Beijing Platform highlights the importance of access to health care, strong preventive programmes that promote women’s health, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-sensitive research, explicitly recognizing and affirming the right of women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility and the need to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

As a worldwide organization of individuals, academic institutions and organizations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians, Wonca has a unique capacity to promote awareness of the vital effects of gender on health. The Wonca Working Party on Women and Family Medicine (WWPWFM) urges Wonca to adopt the following 10 Steps to Gender Equity in Health and proposes that Wonca World and Wonca Regional Councils urge their members to:

- 1) Strive for gender equity in access to health services;
- 2) Work in all Wonca initiatives toward the elimination of gender-based violence;
- 3) Uphold the right of women to reproductive choice and safe motherhood;
- 4) Assert the right of women to safe sex and sexual choice;
- 5) Advocate for women's active participation in decision-making and equitable distribution of resources (health services, income, education, housing, etc);
- 6) Integrate gender perspectives into medical curricula and education, residency training, professional development and patient care throughout the life cycle;
- 7) Promote the integration and understanding of healthy human sexuality in medical curricula and education, residency training, professional development and patient care throughout the life cycle;
- 8) Promote and support research on the impact of gender on health;
- 9) Encourage those individuals and groups in Wonca with special interests in issues such as tobacco cessation, and alcohol and drug misuse, to incorporate a gender perspective;
- 10) Recognize that women's empowerment is a key factor in HIV/AIDS and take concrete action toward addressing this worldwide catastrophe.

We look forward to working with the Executive Council and World Council in the ongoing efforts to have Wonca become a model for gender equity and the integration of gender perspectives in all its policies, programmes, projects, research and legislation.

Respectfully submitted by all participants of the WWPWFM, Hamilton/McMaster meeting, 21-24 August 2006

Signed in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
24<sup>th</sup> August 2006



Dr. Cheryl Levitt  
Chair, WWPWFM  
Family Physician  
Professor, Department of Family Medicine  
McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada  
President, Ontario College of Family Physicians



Dr. Kate Anteyi  
Family Physician  
Abuja, Nigeria  
West Africa



Dr. Susana Alvear  
Family Physician  
Family Practice Residency Director  
Catholic University and Vozandes Hospital  
Quito, Ecuador



Dr. Liliana Arias-Castillo  
Family Physician  
Dean of Health Sciences  
Universidad del Valle  
Cali, Colombia



Dr. Marie Andrades  
Family Physician  
Family Medicine Department  
Aga Khan University  
Karachi, Pakistan



Dr. Anne. Deborah. Atai-Omoruto  
Head, Community Health Department  
Mulago Hospital  
Head, Department of Family Medicine  
Faculty of Medicine, Makerere University  
Kampala, Republic of Uganda  
East Africa



Dr. Lucy Candib  
Family Physician  
Professor of Family Medicine and Community  
Health  
University of Massachusetts Medical School  
Family Health Center of Worcester  
Worcester, MA , USA



Dr. May Cohen  
Family Physician  
Professor Emeritus  
Department of Family Medicine  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Canada



Dr. Jan Coles  
Family Physician  
Monash University  
East Bentleigh, Australia



Dr. Nandani de Silva  
Family Physician  
Professor of Family Medicine  
Vice Chancellor  
Open University of Sri Lanka  
Vice President  
College of General Practitioners  
of Sri Lanka  
Colombo, Sri Lanka.



Dr. Sheila Dunn  
Family Physician  
Women's College Hospital  
Toronto, Canada



Dr. Kymm Feldman  
Family Physician  
Pre-clerkship Director  
Department Family Medicine,  
University of Toronto,  
Women's College Hospital  
Toronto, Canada



Dr. Linda French  
Family Physician  
Associate Professor  
Department of Family Practice  
College of Human Medicine  
Michigan State University, USA



Dr. Betsy Garrett  
Family Physician  
Professor of Clinical Family and Community  
Medicine  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
USA



Dr. Ilse Hellemann  
Family Physician  
Austrian Representative to the Council of the  
European Society of General Practice/Family  
Medicine  
Graz, Austria

*Michelle Howard*

Michelle Howard, MSc,  
Research Coordinator  
Department of Family Medicine, McMaster  
University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
Canada

*Marlene Joseph*

Dr. Marlene Joseph  
Family Physician  
St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda

*Flor Ledesma*

Dr. Flor Ledesma  
Family Physician  
Associate Professor,  
Dpto. Integral Public Health  
University of Zulia  
Maracaibo-Edo. Zulia  
Venezuela

*Barbara Lent*

Dr. Barbara Lent  
Family Physician  
Associate Dean  
Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry The  
University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

*Zorayda Leopando*

Dr. Zorayda Leopando  
Family Physician  
Professor of Family and Community Medicine  
Vice Chancellor for Planning and Development  
University of the Philippines  
Manila  
Philippines

*Dorothy Pietersz-Janga*

Dr. Dorothy Pietersz-Janga,  
Family Physician,  
Director of CCFP for Curacao,  
Netherlands Antilles (Dutch West Indies)  
Medenfys  
Curaçao, Neth. Antilles

*Somjit Prueksaritanond*

Dr. Somjit Prueksaritanond  
Family Physician  
Associate Professor Family Medicine  
Department of Family Medicine  
Ramathibodi Medical School  
Mahidol University  
Bangkok, Thailand

*Sue Smith*

Dr. Sue Smith  
Family Physician  
Assoc Prof, Dept of Family Medicine  
BPKIHS  
Dharan, Nepal

*Sarah E. Strasser*

Dr. Sarah Strasser  
Family Physician  
Associate Professor Family Medicine  
Northern Ontario Medical School  
Sudbury, Ontario, Canada

*Ruth Stewart*

Dr. Ruth Stewart  
Family Physician  
Director of Women in Rural Practice  
Australian College of Rural and Remote  
Medicine  
Camperdown, Victoria, Australia

### Key international documents that address these issues

1. UN documents on Millennium Development Goals (available at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/documents.html>)
2. United Nations Population Fund. State of World Population 2005. The Promise of Equality: Gender Equity, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals. 2005 [particularly Chapter 4 on Reproductive Health, Chapter 6 on Partnering with Boys and Men, Chapter 7 on Gender-Based Violence] (available at [http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/pdf/en\\_swp05.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/pdf/en_swp05.pdf))
3. Millennium Project. The Overview Report: A Practical Guide to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals. 2005 (available at <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/overviewEngLowRes.pdf>)
4. Annan, Kofi. In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All. Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for decision by Heads of State and Government. September 2005 (available at <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/index.html>)
5. Many articles that focus on difficulties achieving goals 3 (to promote gender equality and empower women) and goals 5 (to improve maternal health). One example is Simwaka B, Theobald, S, Amekudzi Y, and Tolhurst R. Meeting millennium development goals 3 and 5. BMJ 2005;331:708-9. (available at <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/reprint/bmj;331//7519/708>)
6. International Consensus Statement on Women's Mental Health. World Psychiatry 2006; 5(1). (available at <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/index.html>)
7. Medical Women International Association. Gender Mainstreaming in Health. 2002 (available at <http://www.mwia.net/gmanual.pdf>)
8. Pan American Health Organization. Gender Equity Policy. 2005 (available at <http://www.paho.org/English/AD/GE/PAHOGenderEqualityPolicy2005.pdf>)
9. WHO document on Engendering the Millennium Development Goals on Health. 2003. (available at <http://www.who.int/gender/mainstreaming/en/MDG.pdf>)
10. WHO document on A Summary of the 'So What?' Report: A look at Whether Integrating a Gender Focus into Programmes makes a difference to Outcomes, 2005 (available at <http://www.who.int/gender/documents/SoWhatReportSept.05.pdf>)
11. Doyal, Lesley. Sex, gender and health: The need for a new approach. BMJ 2001; 323:1061-3 (available at <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/reprint/331/7519/708> )
12. <http://www.who.int/gender/en/index.html>

FINAL WITH SIGNATURES:9 DEC 06