



GREEN-PINK FACT SHEET

Women's Rights are Crucial to Saving the Planet

In many parts of the developing world, women are predominantly responsible for providing food and sustenance for their families, which includes collecting water, obtaining fuel, and growing food. Unfortunately, due to gender inequities, these women, who are on the front lines of their country's environmental issues, are also more likely to be malnourished and uneducated. Malnourishment from eating last and least and from over work carrying heavy loads of needed resources like wood and water stunt the bodies of girls and women. When girls and women do the majority of the hard labor, this virtually insures that they will be denied an education. 2/3 of the world's children who receive less than four years of education are girls. And yet, for every year beyond 4th grade that a girl goes to school, her family size will drop 20% and her wages will rise by 20%. Instead, when girls are gathering wood and water, not going to school and consequently married young and living without as many rights in the home, gender inequities then extend to maternal health problems. Difficulties in childbirth that result in death of mother or baby and sometimes in devastating injuries like obstetric fistula are some of the tragedies faced by women and girls. Policies and programs that empower women with access to basic rights – including health care, education and economic opportunity – are essential to alleviating the poverty and inequity that yield life-threatening consequences for women and their children.

Fast Facts about Women and the Environment

How far did women and children in India trek to gather wood for evening meals seven years ago?	Less than 1 mile per day ¹
Since India's forests have been ravished, how far do women and children in India trek to gather wood today?	5-6 miles every day ²
How far do women and girls in Africa walk to fetch water?	10 miles every day ³
How much does a full water container, carried on their heads, weigh?	40 pounds ⁴
How much energy do women expend to carry the water?	1/3 of daily caloric intake ⁵
Percent of women living in poverty worldwide:	70% ⁶
Percent of women who are illiterate worldwide:	64% ⁷
Number of girls under 18 to marry in the next decade:	100 million ⁸
Number of women who lack access to safe and effective family planning services:	200 million ⁹
Number of women who die of pregnancy-related causes every year:	529,000 ¹⁰
Number of women living with obstetric fistula worldwide:	2 million ¹¹
Cost to repair one woman with fistula	\$300

¹ IPRC

² IPRC

³ Women's Human Rights <http://www.whrnet.org/docs/issue-water.html>

⁴ Women's Human Rights <http://www.whrnet.org/docs/issue-water.html>

⁵ Planet Wire <http://www.planetwire.org/details/3142>

⁶ Amnesty International Factsheet, 2006. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/women/economicrights.html>

⁷ United Nations Population Fund http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_gender.htm

⁸ United Nations Population Fund http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_child_marriage.htm

⁹ United Nations Population Fund <http://www.unfpa.org/rh/planning.htm>

¹⁰ United Nations Population Fund http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_rh.htm

¹¹ One by One http://www.fightfistula.org/fistula_faqs.asp

How Wangari Maathai Empowered Women by Planting Trees

In 2004 **Wangari Maathai** won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work as the founder of The Greenbelt Movement, an organization of women which works to counteract the environmental devastation of Africa by planting trees. Wangari Maathai was inspired to take action when she saw how damage to the environment made it difficult for many women to find clean water and food for their families. Now the Greenbelt Movement has planted over 40 million trees and provided over 50,000 women with jobs, as well as the empowering knowledge that anyone can become a steward of the environment.



Excerpts from Wangari Maathai's Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech

When I was growing up in Nyeri in central Kenya, there was no word for desert in my mother tongue, Kikuyu. Our land was fertile and forested. But today in Nyeri, as in much of Africa and the developing world, water sources have dried up, the soil is parched and unsuitable for growing food, and conflicts over land are common. So it should come as no surprise that I was inspired to plant trees to help meet the basic needs of rural women. As a member of the National Council of Women of Kenya in the early 1970's, **I listened as women related what they wanted but did not have enough of: energy, clean drinking water and nutritious food.**

My response was to begin planting trees with them, to help heal the land and break the cycle of poverty. Trees stop soil erosion, leading to water conservation and increased rainfall. Trees provide fuel, material for building and fencing, fruits, fodder, shade and beauty. As household managers in rural and urban areas of the developing world, women are the first to encounter the effects of ecological stress. It forces them to walk farther to get wood for cooking and heating, to search for clean water and to find new sources of food as old ones disappear.

My idea evolved into the Green Belt Movement, made up of thousands of groups, primarily of women, who have planted 30 million trees across Kenya. The women are paid a small amount for each seedling they grow, giving them an income as well as improving their environment. The movement has spread to countries in East and Central Africa.

Through this work, I came to see that environmental degradation by poor communities was both a source of their problems and a symptom. Growing crops on steep mountain slopes leads to loss of topsoil and land deterioration. Similarly, deforestation causes rivers to dry up and rainfall patterns to shift, which, in turn, result in much lower crop yields and less land for grazing. [...].

Land issues in Kenya are complex and easily exploited by politicians. Communities needed to understand and be sensitized about the history of land ownership and distribution in Kenya and Africa. We held seminars on human rights, governing and reducing conflict.

In time, the Green Belt Movement became a leading advocate of reintroducing multi-party democracy and free and fair elections in Kenya. Through public education, political advocacy and protests, we also sought to protect open spaces and forests from unscrupulous developers, who were often working hand in hand with politicians, through public education, political advocacy and protests. [The President's] government strongly opposed advocates for democracy and environmental rights; harassment, beatings, death threats and jail time followed, for me and for many others.

Fortunately, in 2002, Kenyans realized their dream and elected a democratic government. **What we've learned in Kenya - the symbiotic relationship between the sustainable management of natural resources and democratic governance - is also relevant globally.**

Indeed, many local and international wars, like those in West and Central Africa and the Middle East, continue to be fought over resources. In the process, human rights, democracy and democratic space are denied.

I believe the Nobel Committee recognized the links between the environment, democracy and peace and sought to bring them to worldwide attention with the Peace Prize that I am accepting today. The committee, I believe, is seeking to encourage community efforts to restore the earth at a time when we face the ecological crises of deforestation, desertification, water scarcity and a lack of biological diversity.

Unless we properly manage resources like forests, water, land, minerals and oil, we will not win the fight against poverty. And there will not be peace. Old conflicts will rage on and new resource wars will erupt unless we change the path we are on.

To celebrate this award, and the work it recognizes of those around the world, let me recall the words of Gandhi: My life is my message. Also, plant a tree.