

## Women's issues key to peace

### International Women's Day good time to reflect

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Photo by David Loye

Do wars make us safer or do they create and intensify the cycle of violence that puts us at risk in the first place? In this nuclear and biological age, can we survive if peace is only an interval between wars? We have embarked upon another war, spreading again, the cycle of bloodshed, violence, and suffering.

Some say war is inevitable, but the research of Dr. Riane Eisler shows otherwise. We **can** build cultures of peace: partnership cultures. Now is our chance to break the cycle and lay the foundations for real peace in our time. Dr. Eisler's work has shown that the first step is to examine the position of women in society:

March 8th is International Women's Day, a vital time to recognize the link between reactionary, warlike regimes and the oppression of women. So-called women's issues are central to advancing human rights, peace and prosperity for everyone.

A distinguishing feature of reactionary regimes is their threat to women. A Nazi rallying cry was, let's get women back into their "traditional" place. One of Ayatollah Khomeini's first acts when he came to power in Iran was repealing laws that gave women a modicum of rights.

In the United States during the 1970s, the right-wing, fundamentalist alliance first mobilized to defeat the proposed Equal Rights Amendment.

The subordination of women is foundational to systems of control -- in the family, religion, politics and economics.

There is also a direct link between violence against women and terrorism and war. The Sept. 11 terrorists came from cultures where women are terrorized into submission. Top-down families where children learn that it is normal, even honorable, to use violence to impose your will on others, are schools for violence.

On the flip side, where the rights of women are protected, nations can thrive.

A study of 89 nations by the organization I direct, the Center for Partnership Studies, shows that the status of women can be a better predictor of the general quality of life than a nation's wealth. In nations such as Sweden, Norway and Finland, the status of women is much higher than in many other countries. The Scandinavians pioneered the first peace academies and the first laws prohibiting violence against children in families. Their policies support the stereotypical women's work of caregiving on a universal basis -- universal health care, childcare allowances and paid parental leave.

Once poor, these nations have a high standard of living for all. Their caregiving policies were a major factor in producing the high-quality human capital needed for sustainable economic development.

The Scandinavian nations have moved toward the partnership model. A key component of this model is a more equal partnership between women and men, and with this, more focus on nurturing and creativity rather than violence and destructiveness. It's time to wake up the world.

Let's work to universalize the so-called women's issues so we can build the foundations for a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable partnership world for us all.