Asilomar
Declaration and Call to Action on Women and Leadership

International Leadership Association

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Asilomar Declaration and Call to Action on Women and Leadership* is a guide for individual women, women's networks, and other stakeholders and organizations that actively campaign for enhancing women's leadership status worldwide. The document is designed to inspire both its authors and readers to take action in multiple ways to make leadership equality a reality. To this end, the Declaration contains strategic "calls for action" that readers may take to help change the leadership status of women worldwide. These calls for action are preceded by corresponding declarations of the existing realities to help each of us contemplate and integrate new practices into our lives.

Readers are encouraged to be attentive to how individual daily activities can be the catalyst for large scale change. For example, current leaders can more intentionally serve as role models to help women and girls build confidence, resilience, and resourcefulness. The calls for action also encourage collaboration and continued dialogue to address societal challenges such as various cultural, racial, religious, social, or structural barriers impeding women in their leadership journey.

The *Asilomar Declaration and Call to Action* was originally prepared to inspire and mobilize those attending the 2013 conference of the Women and Leadership Affinity Group of the International Leadership Association. At its 2015 conference, participants determined that the document could be a catalyst for a much wider population. Consequently, the document was modified to inspire a wider range of leadership stakeholders to take measurable actions towards eliminating the inequities of women's leadership status worldwide. The document represents the collective expertise of the scholars and practitioners who attended the conferences, namely, individuals who (1) study and conduct research around the issues of women and leadership and/or (2) design and deliver leadership development/coaching programs and related consultative services for helping women to strengthen their leadership ability. Five major focus areas frame the calls for action:

1. Increasing Equality in Power and Decision-Making
2. Helping Girls and Young Women Become Leaders
3. Expanding Leadership Education and Development Worldwide
4. Advancing Women in Leadership
5. Identifying Critical Areas for Future Research

Those preparing the Declaration encourage individuals and organizations to step forward to personally accept one or more of the calls to action and to move the conversation forward even more intentionally and assertively than in the past. We are convinced the time for bringing an end to the inequality of women and leadership has come!

INTRODUCTION

The *Asilomar Declaration and Call to Action (Declaration)* was first published in 2013 by attendees of the International Leadership Association's (ILA) Women and Leadership Affinity Group (WLAG) inaugural conference held June 9-12, 2013. The conference, held at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, California, USA, had the theme "Building, Bridging, and Blazing Pathways for Women and Leadership: Celebrating the Past, Present, and Future." After the second conference "Advancing Women in Leadership: Waves of Possibilities" was held in June 2015, we updated and refined the Declaration, resulting in this edition. The purpose of the Declaration is to capture and disseminate our collective ideas and challenge ourselves and the world to change the status of women worldwide. Through careful review of the United Nations' (UN) efforts to combat inequality in leadership, we designed both conferences to catalyze our collective knowledge about how we could and should assist individuals, groups, organizations, and countries to prepare and increase the number of effective women leaders. Sessions at both conferences were designed to harness the latest research and gather proven best practices in order to identify specific declarations and calls to action that we can all take to promote gender equality in leadership. This document demonstrates the continued commitment of the WLAG, the ILA, and conference participants to further the cause of women and leadership. It is also a platform for sharing the insights of leadership scholars, educators, and practitioners with other organizations also committed to advancing women's leadership.

Background

Description of Women and Leadership Affinity Group: The WLAG is a network of leadership scholars and practitioners who work together to enhance their knowledge, expertise, and research in the area of women and leadership and to advance the standing of women in leadership. The WLAG began in 2010, when three ILA members organized a "Women in Leadership Network Luncheon" at ILA's annual conference. Approximately 100 passionate individuals gathered around interest tables for engaging lunchtime conversations. At the conclusion of the luncheon, each table provided feedback on how participants would like to create a more formal networking effort. Based on this feedback, in the spring of 2011, Dr. Susan R. Madsen founded the WLAG with an executive leadership team comprised of 12 members, who began identifying various organizational elements of the WLAG (e.g., charter, website, structure); the team convened officially at the 2011 October ILA Conference in London.

The purpose of the WLAG is to facilitate interaction and organize activities that support diverse and sustained conversations on the subject of women and leadership. The unique goals of this scholar/ practitioner group include providing information, resources, and networking opportunities for those scholars and practitioners who (1) study and conduct research around the issues of women and leadership and/or (2) design and deliver leadership development/coaching programs and related consultative services for helping women to strengthen their leadership.

Location and Significance of Asilomar: Asilomar is a YWCA Summer Leadership Camp built in 1913 for girls and women. Known for its famous architecture, rich history, and pristine surroundings, the state park and conference center is located on 107 acres of state beach within the town of Pacific Grove, California. Asilomar is celebrated for its restored dune ecosystem and architecture designed by renowned architect Julia Morgan. In 2012, to recognize its 100 years of continual service to all citizens, and women in particular, Asilomar approached ILA about a synergistic opportunity for a women-centered leadership conference. The confluence of events was perfect, as the new WLAG was actively considering offering such a gathering. A contract was signed, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Genesis of the Declaration and Call to Action: In early 2012, the WLAG Executive Planning Team agreed that in order to move the women and leadership conversation forward globally, it was critical that a document be created and widely distributed that would highlight declarations and calls to action that would emerge from the conference. The idea came from studying the related United Nations (UN) history. In 1975 the UN organized the historic World Conference on Women in Mexico City; subsequent UN conferences on women led to the development in 1995 of The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which provided an assessment of the status of women at the close of the twentieth century and suggested paths forward. Since then, the UN has held periodic gatherings to set priorities and assess progress on The Declaration and the status of women and girls. The startup of an umbrella agency in 2012, the UN Women, provided an entity that has streamlined and further strengthened efforts for gender equality.

To build on these actions, WLAG leaders reviewed UN reports to identify leadership issues according to two criteria: (1) issues directly related to women and leadership that the UN reports confirmed need more work and research; and (2) issues in which members of the WLAG have expertise and knowledge. The five areas listed below emerged from the analysis.

Conference leaders considered the particular contributions that conference attendees could make to extend the overall global conversation; they designed processes to catalyze and capture the expertise and conference learning from participants to share in the *Asilomar Declaration and Call to Action on Women and Leadership.* The first four areas listed above became the streams for the 2015 conference to ensure that these themes remain central topics of discussion. The methods, described next, may provide other groups with innovative ways to amplify their collective voices for change.

Process

Both of the WLAG conferences were designed to maximize the exchange of ideas, facilitate conversations, and capture new knowledge regarding an array of topics related to advancing women and leadership. Specifically, the conferences became catalysts for moving the conversation forward through lively interaction and by a combination of facilitated meetings, fireside chats, developmental roundtables, facilitated mealtime conversations, and more. These different venues provided diverse opportunities for conference participants to engage in dynamic conversations on women and leadership. At the first conference, a number of session facilitators and volunteer representatives — all coached beforehand on the purpose of the event — collected notes and reflections from participants. Then, immediately following the conference, the notes and reflections were collected and compiled into one document. These notes, as well as post-conference reflections, the conference program, and the texts of all presentations and session abstracts, became the primary sources for drafting the original Declaration in 2013. Six volunteer writing teams (with a total of 28 individuals) were assigned a section of the document and were tasked with analyzing and synthesizing information from the source documents. After the full Declaration was compiled and refined by team leaders,

it was sent to all conference participants for review and approval and ultimately distributed to leaders and researchers around the world. For the 2015 conference, the process was modified in order to build on to the 2013 work. At the second conference, a closing plenary session provided attendees an opportunity to share new insights and ideas that were then captured, reviewed, and analyzed by conference organizers, and then integrated into this version.

This second version of the Declaration is being redistributed to the UN Women, hundreds of key global contacts, and countless women's groups and associations around the world who are committed to advancing women's leadership. We believe that this document will provide important information and insights to organizations working on these issues and those planning future global events and efforts.

The Report

From the deliberative process started in January 2012 to the global conferences in June of 2013 and 2015, we have organized the report into five sections to represent the expertise, research, and best practices of WLAG members and other conference participants. These sections reflect our collective wisdom, passion, and commitment to women and leadership, and are presented as follows:

Section I: Increasing Equality in Power and Decision-Making
Section II: Helping Girls and Young Women Become Leaders
Section III: Expanding Leadership Education and Development Worldwide
Section IV: Advancing Women in Leadership
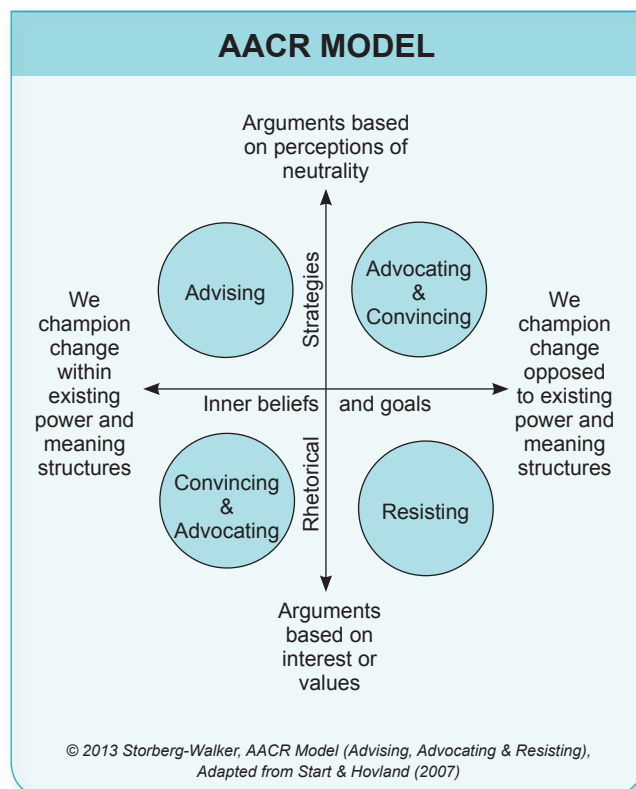Section V: Identifying Critical Areas for Future Research

SECTION I:
Increasing Equality in Power and Decision-Making

"Equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women."

— Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Despite tireless work by countless numbers of women, men, girls, and boys around the globe to create a world of equality, research continues to document a persistent gender imbalance in leadership positions and key decision-making bodies in both the public and private realm (European Commission, January 2010). Following the United Nations' *Womenwatch* strategy, we believe we need to focus on fostering equality in three domains: (1) the social/cultural domain; (2) the economic domain; and (3) the political/civic domain. Equality in power and decision-making will likely look different in each domain, as will the strategies and tactics used to accomplish change. Further, only by addressing the structural foundations of gender inequality will true equality be achieved.

AACR MODEL

Arguments based on perceptions of neutrality

Strategies

Advising

Advocating & Convincing

We champion change within existing power and meaning structures

Inner beliefs and goals

We champion change opposed to existing power and meaning structures

Rhetorical

Convincing & Advocating

Resisting

Arguments based on interest or values

© 2013 Storberg-Walker, AACR Model (Advising, Advocating & Resisting), Adapted from Start & Hovland (2007)

To categorize the diverse actions and strategies available to us as change makers, we adopted the AACR Model (Storberg-Walker, 2013). This model, adapted from Start and Hovland's (2007) "Tools for Policy Impact," illustrates a way to categorize the different beliefs and strategies that guide our actions. AACR stands for advising, advocating, convincing, and resisting — four tactics for change. The four tactics are archetypes or "pure forms" that can help us understand the hidden connections and shared goals of scholars building new women and leadership theories with those of practitioners protesting in the halls of Congress. The horizontal axis represents a spectrum of beliefs and goals; our ideas fall along the spectrum from the far left (advocating for human rights) to the far right (advocating for an end to patriarchy) and everywhere in between. The vertical axis represents the spectrum of rhetorical strategies we use to construct our arguments for change. Arguments based on the notion of scientific neutrality or evidence-based practice are above the horizontal axis, and arguments based on values or interests follow.

The two axes create four quadrants with change tactics generated from our diverse beliefs, goals, and strategies. All four types of tactics were present in the conversations, presentations, and panel discussions at the Asilomar conferences. Scholarly social scientists presented value-free statistics that confirmed the inequality in power and decision-making across the globe. Passionate consultants/practitioners described moments of personal resistance to racism and gender discrimination. Women united in the cause debated with each other on priorities, content, and focus. Collectively, we represent a multiplicity of perspectives, and we identify ourselves at different locations within the AACR Model. We seek to align our collective interests as researchers, change makers, practitioners, mentors, students, mothers, fathers, and workers to extend our reach globally to learn, educate, and foster locally generated solutions for equality in power and decision-making. We do so with the following declarations and calls to action:

A. Declarations

1. *We declare* that the concept of neutrality — including but not limited to gender, race, sexual orientation, and ability — masks unspoken assumptions, biases, and standards that limit the self-concept of girls and women across the globe.

2. *We declare* that all claims of neutrality in practice, research, and policy are based on inaccurate assumptions and understandings; consequently, any program, policy, or research based on this claim will be insufficient to generate the structural, social, economic, cultural, and political changes needed to enhance women's global equality in power and decision-making.

3. *We declare* that the negative consequences women and girls encounter when they advocate for equality in power and decision-making vary widely in their severity — ranging from assassination or attempted assassination (for example, Malala Yousafzai) to cool indifference. We believe this range of consequences — from violent to uncivil — are a function of the advocate's race, skin color, culture, context, socio-economic status, age, and religion. We do not all suffer in the same ways.

4. *We declare* that outdated perceptions of the roles of men and women by both men and women contribute to gender disparity. Acknowledging that different cultures generate diverse experiences and perceptions, we believe that the gender disparity is generated by an unexamined belief that men should provide for the home, and women should care for the home. This belief diminishes both the possible roles for women outside of the home and the possible roles for men within it; this belief sustains the male-centered definitions of activity outside of the home, including leadership and power; and perpetuates generation after generation of girls and women who are not able to see themselves as leaders with power.

5. *We declare* that "horizontal violence" (Freire, 1993) between women perpetuates male leadership norms, sustains gender disparity in power and decision-making, and undermines women's advancement as leaders. Horizontal violence is a recognized byproduct of the unequal distribution of power in society stemming from the relationship between oppressors and the oppressed. Funk (2002) identifies horizontal violence as dismissive, negative, demeaning, and hostile behavior caused by powerlessness and impotence; and we believe both macro (structural) and micro (individual) transformation is the only way to fully rid ourselves of these patterns.

6. *We declare* that the engine of change should operate at the local, grassroots level. While we acknowledge that an interdependent relationship exists between local, national, and global forces, we believe that sustained change — change that is safe for women across the globe and change that will shift the larger systems that perpetuate inequality — must come from the dedication and hard work of individual women, men, workers, and community leaders at the local level.

7. *We declare* that equality in power and decision-making will look different and have diverse meanings across global cultures, institutions, organizations, and communities. Consequently, we believe that statistics generated to measure the influence of women across the globe provide only a partial picture. A more complete picture must include understanding the contextual norms, cultures, meanings, and standards at the local level. To this end, we believe that collaborative and participatory approaches to scholarly research, advocacy, and activism are essential for achieving equality in power and decision-making.

8. *We declare* that even if we were to reach gender parity within existing political, economic, and social systems or structures around the world, we still would not have reached gender equality. We believe that only when these systems promote principles of inclusion, equality, and collaboration in power and decision-making will true gender equality exist.

9. *We declare* that the diversity of women and women's perspectives across the globe is a strength heretofore underutilized and under-examined. We believe that exposing our differences honestly, authentically, and respectfully will generate the collaborative space needed for accomplishing our goals.

10. *We declare* that we have the power within us to contribute to this united and compelling force for change.

B. Call to Action

1. **As individual women, we must…**
    a. Remain or become active participants in local, state/provincial, national, and global organizations pursuing strategies for gender equality.
    b. Work to be change makers in our daily lives, to lift ourselves and others from self-limiting beliefs and attitudes, and to resolve tendencies of horizontal violence.
    c. Become or remain connected to women and men across the globe working to empower women and girls.
    d. Model confident, authentic, resilient, collaborative, and impactful leadership for ourselves, for the next generation of girls, and for the world.
    e. Conduct rigorous and meaningful research using feminist theories and both qualitative and quantitative methods to encourage, develop, examine, or deconstruct equality in power and decision making.
    f. Design and deliver services and interventions to enhance women's power and decision-making authority.

2. **We encourage women's networks and organizations to…**
    a. "Lean in and step up" to make equality in power and decision-making a local, national, and global priority.
    b. Develop networks of support for members working to make equality in power and decision-making a reality in their communities, organizations, states/provinces, government institutions, churches, schools, institutions, associations, tribes, and neighborhoods.
    c. Partner with and develop reciprocal relationships with organizations working towards equality in power and decision-making.
    d. Become catalysts for expanding research horizons and fostering research to practice innovative applications and interventions for enhancing women's power and decision-making authority.
    e. Host regular conferences, sessions, workshops, and gatherings that explore and foster the role of women in leadership.
    f. Align with affiliated organizations to acknowledge the impact of gender on the research and practice of leadership across the globe and to provide resources and publication opportunities for leadership scholars focused on gender issues.
    g. Use all available channels to share needs, challenges, and success stories related to increasing women's equality in power and decisions making.

3. **Other stakeholders and organizations are urged to…**
    a. Generate, support, nurture, and disseminate research on gender inequality in women and leadership; this includes partnering with existing global and national organizations and contributing time, talent, and funds for policy changes toward women's equality in power and decision-making.
    b. Employ women and help us change the world one day at a time.
    c. Advance entrepreneurial activities that encourage women to face risk-taking.
    d. Call on our elected officials to reframe the debate about women and leadership from outdated ideas based on gender roles in economic production, to ideas based on equality, empowerment, inclusion, and cooperation.
    e. Enlist people who currently play or hold leadership roles — in our communities, organizations, schools, churches, and companies — to reflect and take action to expand women's equality in power and decision-making.
    f. Invest in technology infrastructure to facilitate easy communication between women activists across the globe. In addition, social media and cloud data should be maximized to share information and resources, identify emerging trends, and connect the diverse women and men working for equality in power and decision-making.
    g. Remind all stakeholders of the power of collaboration and alliances when seeking to change the world.

SECTION II:
Helping Girls and Young Women Become Leaders

"If we are to succeed in our efforts to build a healthier, more peaceful and equitable world, classrooms must be full of girls as well as boys. By educating girls, we will help raise economic productivity and reduce both maternal and infant mortality.
By educating girls, we will improve nutrition, promote health, and fight HIV/AIDS.
By educating girls, we will trigger a transformation of society as a whole —
social, economic and political."

— Kofi Annan, 2005

Overwhelming evidence confirms that gender inequality exists in many different areas, and that many women are discouraged from thinking of themselves as leaders. This limiting environment begins in childhood and continues through adulthood. Girls are less likely than boys to obtain a secondary education in most developing countries (UNICEF State of World's Children, 2007). Yet research shows that when women have more influence in households, obtain an education, work in safe and fair environments, and are part of the political process, not only do their household (family, income, health, etc.) improve, so does society as a whole (UNICEF State of World's Children, 2007). Even the youngest girl can have a huge impact on her home, community, country, and world; the earlier we infuse her with leadership ideals, characteristics, skills, mindset, and education, the greater the likelihood that barriers to her equality will be overcome.

A basic question is: How can we provide girls and young women a head start as leaders and give them the tools and support to succeed in an ever-changing and barrier-riddled cultural, educational, employment, and global environment? The proceedings of the Asilomar Conferences have confirmed the existing barriers to inequality but also pushed the boundaries of existing models, platforms, organizations, and declarations focused on girls and young women becoming leaders in these turbulent times. We seek to continue to collaborate with all stakeholders to move forward in developing and supporting our future women leaders through these specific declarations and calls to action.

A. Declarations

1. *We declare* that in order to best address "how" to help young women and girls to become leaders, we must have a broad and rich understanding about women and leadership across cultures, religions, races, economic systems, and political traditions. We must understand the various journeys to leadership and the influence of social forces; we must also explore diverse views on leadership from multiple cultural perspectives.

2. *We declare* that through focused, participative, and cross-cultural research, we should seek to understand how leadership is defined by young women around the world; how girls learn leadership; how success and well-being are variously defined; how leadership development strategies and programs affect young women; and how external environments such as culture, athletics, the military, schools, and organizational settings affect the role of women in leadership.

3. *We declare* that with discipline and openness, we should understand and challenge the various definitions of leadership as well as our understanding of what we consider to be effective leadership. The multiple roles of leaders should be reviewed, challenged, and refined by women to ensure the creation of meaningful, relevant, and culturally appropriate paths for future female leaders. A more comprehensive understanding of leadership should challenge traditional and societal definitions of leader roles. We advocate a research-based process that will identify roles through which women have led in community building, child-rearing, and managing their family's welfare.

4. *We declare* that mutual support is critical for girls and young women to advance their leadership skills through available opportunities. We expect these opportunities to include early leadership training and exposure to sustained development across activities, events, and key milestones (e.g., faith-based or traditional gateways to adulthood). The opportunities should emphasize the development of characteristics such as assertiveness, courage, self-efficacy, purposefulness, resilience, and risk taking, and abilities such as being able to negotiate, learn from failure, accept feedback, work in teams, build relationships; and create cross-gender, intra-generational support systems. To achieve this, we must build a system of people and organizations committed to supporting and developing girls as leaders, including: mothers, fathers, teachers/educators, community leaders, and civic and youth organizations. We should ensure the success of such systems through research, development, and evaluations that ensure that abundant and complementary supports are in place across every developmental stage of a female's life.

5. *We declare* that helping women, young women and girls become leaders should include collaboration with supportive, innovative, and compassionate men, young men, and boys. From our first declaration to the last, women should seek the input of men as appropriate, and should engage and include men in the development, design, and ongoing conversations regarding leadership. Young men and boys in similar training and development should be included so that men and women can grow as leaders together.

6. *We declare* a need to create openness by understanding, defining, and encouraging the process by which women "own" leadership. We recognize that in many cases women are leading but do not consider themselves to be leading or to be leaders. Thus, it is crucial that we study women in leadership and define women's leadership. Women have an important role in the way young girls view leadership by women; confidence and clarity are essential.

7. *We declare* that social media and technology play a pivotal role in the means by which we engage young women and girls. Our role begins with considering the ways we champion valuable information, counter non-valuable information, and challenge and shift the media portrayal of women. The shift can be achieved through women leaders of and in media organizations who have a shared vision for strength of character and the role of the feminine, creating a new portrayal strategy.

8. *We declare* that globalization is creating a more "flat," connected, and interdependent world, and that young girls have the opportunity and privilege to ensure a greater global awareness. We recognize the need to build a global mindset through programs and experiences that expand current models to include cross-cultural, cross-boundary events for young women. We realize the importance of working with young women to co-create these events and experiences.

9. *We declare* that even if excellent leadership development programs for girls are developed and deployed worldwide, equality would not be accomplished without structural changes in social, economic, and political systems.

B. Call to Action

1. **As individual women we must…**
   a. Challenge ourselves to create and sustain networks to share information and bring increased attention to leadership topics that support girls and young women.
   b. Commit to being conscious of opportunities to share the knowledge we have about women and leadership with girls and young women in our networks and communities.
   c. Seek opportunities to embed leadership development exercises, trainings, and activities for girls at work and in our communities.
   d. Hold ourselves accountable to assist in overturning the media's negative portrayal of girls and women through modeling, activism, and advocacy.
   e. Challenge ourselves to support the development of new definitions of leadership through our work as researchers and/or consultants.
   f. Support the exploration of "effective leadership" through context-specific, participative research, and inquiry-based practice.
   g. Commit to support cross-cultural leadership development research designed to identify culture-specific norms, standards, and expectations for women leaders. Knowledge of these norms and standards can be the first step towards developing programs focused on incremental and safe changes for women and girls.
   h. Encourage the men in our spheres of influence to recognize the limitations of their own mindsets and be open to new possibilities regarding how society is led.
   i. Challenge women of privilege to recognize the limitations of their own mindsets and be open to new possibilities in how society is led and how girls are developed.
   j. Identify their (women's) leadership roles and to press forward as community leaders, regardless of how difficult or how many barriers they experience.
   k. Encourage all men and women to be more aware of and seek to understand the unconscious bias that continues to exist around the world.
   l. Engage in opportunities as equal partners with women and to support the inclusion of women leaders.

2. **We encourage women's networks and organizations to…**
   a. Use the force of their communities to develop the conversation, inclusive of men, with those who are identified as having leadership potential.
   b. Recruit influential men who are supportive of women as leaders and can act as compassionate collaborators of the cause.
   c. Develop a repository of leadership development programs for young women and girls in order to share best practices.
   d. Support — through in-kind donations, financial donations, or writing and obtaining grants — a sustained research agenda that examines the diverse means by which girls are educated for leadership across the globe.
   e. Partner with other like-minded organizations that focus on leadership development for girls and young women.
   f. Facilitate the intergenerational networking of women and girls for the purpose of the training, mentoring and development of emerging leaders.
   g. Capture young women's differing perspectives and frameworks on leadership and utilize these in expanding the training, mentoring and development of girls emerging as leaders.

3. **Other stakeholders and organizations are urged to…**
   a. Provide ample opportunity for young women to play an active role in the governance of the organizations, including positions on boards and committees.
   b. Pursue the rigorous global enlistment of young women as active participants, including international events that illustrate the leadership potential society holds for them.
   c. Target organizations around the world that work to develop girls and young women and invite them to participate and collaborate. To address funding challenges, we recommend that such organizations create alternative membership fee structures for those in countries of greatest need.
   d. Support — through in-kind donations, financial donations, or through writing and obtaining grants — a sustained research agenda that examines the diverse ways girls are educated for leadership across the globe.
   e. Develop educational programs that enhance the potential of all students and include youth in planning activities for fulfilling the promise.
   f. Provide opportunities in communities for young women to become coaches, mentors, and advisors, which will support future leadership roles for women.
   g. Create programs for young women in which they fulfill roles as civic leaders in local, regional, and national political arenas.

SECTION III:
Expanding Leadership Education and Development Worldwide

"Ensure the availability of a broad range of educational and training programmes
that lead to ongoing acquisition by women and girls of the knowledge and skills required
for living in, contributing to and benefiting from their communities and nations."

— Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Due largely to well-documented contextual constraints, including the demands of child care, domestic chores, and farm work as well as the inhibiting factors of tradition, ethnicity, and social class, women and girls are underrepresented in formal and informal leadership positions. We assert the need for leadership education for women and girls of all ethnicities, in all countries, all contexts, and at all levels of privilege. Our intent is not to send the message that women and girls need "fixing." We believe that girls need consistent affirmative support and encouragement from their early years to help them overcome or resist societal, cultural, and religious messages as well as self-limiting personal beliefs that can constrain goals, dreams, and attitudes about fulfilling formal and informal leadership roles. At the same time, we are compelled to send the clear message that as scholars and practitioners, we know very little about the developmental trajectory of women leaders. As women and leadership researchers and advocates, we must conduct rigorous social science research in order to best inform the development and pedagogy of leadership education programs for women and girls.

This section begins with several assertions relevant to the need for leadership development among women and girls. It is followed by a global call to action for leadership development programs that address all contexts, all ethnicities, all classes, and all parts of the world.

A. Declarations

1. *We declare* that there is an urgent need to increase leadership education and development opportunities for women and girls worldwide. We believe, however, that simply increasing the number of leadership programs and mentoring opportunities across the globe is a simplistic and ineffectual response to a complex issue.

2. *We declare* that more research is needed to understand women's leadership trajectories in multiple contexts, cultures, and societies. Research can provide the foundation of understanding how women develop into leaders, and, with that understanding, specific learning activities and frameworks can be developed.

3. *We declare* that women's and girls' leadership development programs will be successful only if the multiple contextual intersectionalities of women's lives are acknowledged, respected, and addressed. These include, but are not limited to, the intersectionalities of gender and race, faith, national and regional identity, ethnicity, lingualism, education and literacy, caste, migration, and incarceration. We assert that while men's intersectionalities may also result in their marginalization, it is women and girls who most often bear the heaviest burdens from the clash of contexts.

4. *We declare* that effective leadership development will require special attention to the intersections within intersections (i.e., roles within roles). For example, in the U.S., immigrant Black women may face additional leadership challenges not typically experienced by their African-American counterparts. Women in evangelical or Muslim groups may find their leadership defined and limited by notions of gender roles and power.

5. *We declare* that the reach of leadership development programs must be extended to marginalized and underserved women populations, including working-class women, rural women, migrant women, and other groups. Privileged women are often held up as leadership role models, yet their leadership challenges are usually much different from those of women with less privilege. Leadership education models must acknowledge and honor the needs and challenges of all women.

6. *We declare* that informal leadership training begins during childhood, and that the media often play a role in perpetuating gender stereotypes. However, parents, caregivers, community members, teachers, coaches, and other early influences can have a positive and significant impact in developing women's leadership potential. We assert that young women should be encouraged to develop a clear vision about the ways they can transform their community.

7. *We declare* that women's leadership education should include a wide range of topics and skills (e.g., relationship building, communication and interpersonal skills, time management, goal setting, confidence building, risk taking, and work-life integration). We assert that while concern over work-life balance can have a dampening effect on the leadership aspirations of many women, transgenerational mentoring can help women understand and learn the skills of leadership and life from each other.

8. *We declare* that, with role models, women can envision themselves taking on formal and informal leadership roles. We suggest that role models, as much as possible, should represent multiple intersectionalities, roles, and backgrounds. Only with these varied influences will the next generation of women leaders develop the abilities to value diverse positions and realities. We assert that as women's leadership stories are retold, their challenges should not be minimized or oversimplified.

B. Call to Action

1. As individual women we must…

a. Maintain connections and networks so that we can share and learn from each other about leadership education and development for women and girls.

b. Mentor girls and young women empowering them to become leaders in their lives and communities.

c. Strive to empower all women to be leaders in their everyday lives, remembering that women leaders around the world have many faces (e.g., mothers, teachers, and community, business, and government leaders). While women in "informal" leadership roles may not think of themselves as leaders, they are leaders and deserve education and development opportunities to assist them in seeing themselves as such.

d. Be sensitive to different contexts, cultures, and generations to ensure that leadership development and education do not take a one-size-fits-all approach.

e. Harness the power of various media resources as a forum to develop and educate women and girls.

f. Recognize the impact we can have on girls and the women around them in their homes, institutions, and communities and deepen their support and engagement in expanding development opportunities for these individuals.

g. Combat the dominant narratives that often shape women's and girl's conception of their leadership capacity and encourage self-authorship as a form of personal leadership development.

h. Conduct rigorous and meaningful research and evaluations, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, to assess and connect leadership education and development around the world.

i. Design leadership education and develop curriculum to enhance women's leadership across various contexts, cultures, and groups.

2. We encourage women's networks and organizations to…

a. Sustain the current momentum and host regular conferences, sessions, workshops, and gatherings that afford women the opportunity to network, share their knowledge, and continue to develop as leaders.

b. Develop networks of support for members to share research, tools, and models of leadership development and education through online platforms to encourage learning and collaboration.

c. Collect and consolidate resources, information, research, and tools into one online platform that is available and accessible to all who work in the area of leadership development and education of women; this will enable us to share existing knowledge and to identify gaps and needs.

d. Re-examine the language of leadership with a goal to be more inclusive as we develop a common language around what leadership means in different cultures, contexts, and generations and how we develop leadership around the world.

e. Foster intergenerational connections and conversations to encourage mentorship, networking, collaboration, and leadership development and education in many contexts.

f. Ensure that program evaluation and adequate outcome measurements are part of leadership development and education so that we can build upon the approaches that work for developing women leaders.

g. Notice the significance in supporting the development of leadership capacities in women and girls at this point in history.

h. Support future events to help faculty, practitioners, and others share research and best practices on different program models and outcomes.

3. Other stakeholders and organizations are urged to…

   a. Investigate the factors that encourage or discourage girls and women from taking leadership roles, or from seeing themselves as leaders in their daily lives.

   b. Develop specific theories and models describing how girls and women prepare to be leaders rather than continuing to rely on male models of leadership development.

   c. Study the early childhood and youth experiences that empower and motivate women to be leaders.

   d. Consider the outcome measures that constitute best-practice markers in determining successful leadership programs for girls and women. As researchers study leadership programs, we challenge them to make a careful catalogue of contextual markers and intersectionalities so that we can begin to determine how leadership programs might be adjusted to best match with context and circumstances.

   e. Take advantage of the research to prepare more specifically targeted experiences for girls and women within the specific cultural or other contexts applicable to them.

   f. Carefully catalog demographics of groups, evaluate successful elements of programs, and report best practices so that a more comprehensive picture of leadership education can emerge.

   g. Implement workplace and school-based leadership programs specifically for girls and women.

   h. Promote the development of female leadership, whether they supervise factory workers, farm laborers, physicians, attorneys, or teachers, and so forth.

SECTION IV: Advancing Women in Leadership

"A woman with a voice is by definition a strong woman.
But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult."

— *Melinda Gates, 2003*

Women leaders from all over the world gathered at Asilomar in 2013 and 2015, united in thought and spirit, to deliberate the issue of advancing women in leadership. We determined that a paradigm shift is required to augment and bolster the miniscule gains made in leadership roles for women. Our increasingly complex, global challenges require a new style of leadership that models inclusive leadership practices and promotes leadership that is "fit-defined" rather than gender-defined. Our aims for advancing women in leadership include building an operational definition of effective leadership, bridging research and practice, blazing new pathways, and embracing possibilities. Our calls to action necessitate that women develop a personal leadership identity, seek challenging opportunities to explore leadership roles, and exercise constructive leadership behaviors through all stages of their lives. We affirm our commitment to Advancing Women in Leadership as follows:

A. Declarations

1. *We declare* that women are persistently underrepresented in leadership roles, especially at the most senior levels, despite an increasingly compelling body of evidence that supports the link between gender representation and organizational performance. We believe establishing, publicizing, and reporting targets; offering fit-for-purpose programs and activities; and addressing institutional, structural, and relational barriers will facilitate a paradigm shift that advances women in leadership.

2. *We declare* that prevailing leadership styles and patterns are predominately hierarchal, autocratic, and exclusive despite research that suggests relational, consensus-building, and inclusive styles are more effective. We believe this traditional mode of leadership is no longer fit-for-purpose in our rapidly changing world with its increasingly complex, transnational challenges. Further, we believe a paradigm shift in leadership style and approach that values and rewards behavior that models connectedness, inclusiveness, mutual respect, interdependence, integrity, and authenticity is required.

3. *We declare* that inclusivity is a moral and business imperative that facilitates the advancement of women in leadership. We believe unexamined assumptions and double standards, as well as invisible barriers embedded in organizational cultures, constrain opportunities for women.

4. We declare that a body of evidence is now widely available and points to strategies organizations have successfully deployed to make a difference in the representation of women at the executive table. We believe it is vitally important that change is led actively and personally by chief executive officers and senior executive teams. We assert our belief that positive role models, informal networks, sponsorship, mentoring, and other tailored developmental activities for women are vital to creating new archetypes.

5. We declare that fostering the advancement of women in leadership globally, particularly in countries and cultures in which women are not able to participate fully in the economy and society, increases economic and social well-being. We affirm our intention to partner with supportive leaders of both genders to bring about positive organizational and societal change.

6. We declare that, as women, we have it within our power to address self-limiting beliefs and inefficacious behaviors that contribute to our not fully exercising choices about our lives and careers. We acknowledge the importance of developing our own confidence, resilience, and resourcefulness to succeed as leaders.

7. We declare our appreciation for the extensive research being undertaken in this field and publicized by a wide range of entities. We commit to actively collaborate with these endeavors and to build on their work. We intend to capitalize on an unprecedented opportunity to continue the dialogue in an effort to shift current paradigms.

B. Call to Action

1. **As individual women we must…**
   a. Consciously and continually develop our own authentic leadership style in harmony with personal values and belief systems and respectful of another woman's right to choose a different leadership style.
   b. Proactively engage in ongoing dialogue and learning about women's leadership and support programs and activities that advance women in leadership.
   c. Explore challenging leadership roles and exercise adaptability in leadership behaviors consistent with both the requirements of each role and our own values.
   d. Examine our own biases, identify assumptions and double standards in the workplace, and question the structural barriers embedded in organizational cultures that constrain opportunities for women.
   e. Be a valuable resource for women, bridge the gap between ourselves and other informal networks, and continue to blaze pathways for advancing women in leadership.
   f. Act as positive role models, sponsors, and mentors; be mindful and intentional in exercising choices; and partner with supportive leaders of both genders to bring about positive organizational and societal change that advances women in leadership globally.
   g. Utilize qualitative and quantitative methodologies to design and conduct rigorous research on advancing women in leadership, with a focus on leadership identity, unconscious bias, and inclusive leadership skills.
   h. Acknowledge our role in supporting women and girls in their quest to build confidence, resilience, and resourcefulness. We challenge ourselves to support them in developing a personal leadership style and in addressing self-imposed barriers that hold them back.
   i. Communicate the key messages in this declaration and call to action within our respective communities.

2. **We encourage women's networks and organizations to…**
   a. Recognize our mutual interdependence, celebrate our differences, and model inclusive leadership practices that empower and advance women in leadership.
   b. Build relationships, facilitate communication, and actively collaborate with individuals, researchers, and entities that promote the advancement of women in leadership locally, nationally, and globally.
   c. Dispute mindsets that suggest leadership is gender-defined and shift the paradigm to leadership that is "fit-defined." We can do so by developing relationships with like-minded individuals and organizations, disseminating related research and best practices information, and promoting recognition or awards for individuals, organizations, and nations that embrace the new paradigm.
   d. Formalize strategic plans of action and milestones, with short- and long-term goals, to direct the advancement of women in leadership. Included in these plans should be an outreach program and periodic assessment and reevaluation periods to allow for growth and change.
   e. Acknowledge the persistent underrepresentation of women in senior leadership roles despite an increasingly compelling body of evidence that supports the link between gender parity and organizational performance.
   f. Endorse inclusive leadership practices as a moral and business imperative that facilitates the advancement of women in leadership.
   g. Foster the advancement of women in leadership globally by partnering with supportive individual, organizational, national, and international leaders of both genders who strive to effect positive cultural change.
   h. Be a bridge between research and practice by connecting ideas and people and acting as a clearinghouse for scholars and practitioners.
   i. Capitalize on an unprecedented opportunity to influence ongoing conversations surrounding the biennial WLAG Conferences and UN Women events by disseminating the *Asilomar Declaration and Call to Action* widely.

3. **Other stakeholders and organizations are encouraged to…**
   a. Examine their beliefs and address self-limiting behaviours that contribute to not fully exercising choices about their lives and careers.
   b. Foster and support the development of women and girls as leaders within their organizations and communities.
   c. Model inclusive leadership practices and embrace a paradigm shift that promotes leadership that is "fit-defined" rather than gender-defined.
   d. Establish "targets with teeth" and measure, report, and hold managers accountable for achieving those targets.
   e. Measure and monitor — by gender — internal promotions, development opportunities, spend levels, and pay plans.
   f. Offer targeted, fit-for-purpose, leadership development opportunities for aspiring women leaders.
   g. Implement unconscious bias-awareness programs in their organizations.
   h. Address structural barriers and facilitate flexible working practices and career paths for women.
   i. Recognize the business case for gender representation at senior levels and adopt a "small wins" approach to change.
   j. Promote educational programs and community outreach activities that advance women in leadership.
   k. Establish, promote, support, and report aspirational targets for the representation of women at all levels in organizations within their own jurisdictions.
   l. Recognize and reward leadership styles that model connectedness, inclusiveness, mutual respect, interdependence, integrity, and authenticity.
   m. Join us in capitalizing on an unprecedented opportunity to continue the conversations surrounding the biennial WLAG Conferences and this document.

SECTION V:
Identifying Critical Areas for Future Research

"A significant body of research indicates that women's empowerment and gender equality have a catalytic effect on the achievement of human development, good governance, sustained peace, and harmonious dynamics between the environment and human population."

— UN Women, 2013

Numerous articles, research reports, and books such as Kristof and WuDunn's *Half the Sky* document the loss to humanity when the talents and potential of women are not developed to address the major challenges facing our world. Leadership has for too long remained male-normed, with powerful but subtle forms of gender bias leading to underrepresentation by women in top leadership roles. One cause, discussed in the September 2013 cover story of *Harvard Business Review,* cites "second-generation gender bias" as "something in the water — in which women fail to thrive or reach their full potential" (p. 64). The resulting loss to organizational effectiveness — which can be a proxy for the community, nation, or society — is described by Helgesen and Johnson in *The Female Vision: Women's Real Power at Work:* "When the female vision remains untapped, both women and organizations suffer. Women are unable to translate their best observations into action…. Without the female vision, organizations also lose power. They undermine the full potential of their talent base" (p. 91).

This Asilomar Declaration identifies areas demanding action at a number of levels — individual, organizational, national, and global. Just as the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform challenged scholars and practitioners to focus attention and willpower on gender issues as a pressing social justice priority, we challenge future researchers to advance gender-related dimensions of leadership studies. Such research will enhance our understanding of individual, organizational, and societal dynamics and advance both inclusive and effective leadership practice. This research will need to be interdisciplinary, to address the complexities of the social construction of gender, and it will need to be multi-paradigm, to encompass and honor the multiple ways of knowing and understanding what it means to be human. The research methods used will need to be diverse — to offer a compelling alternative to the dominant (e.g., male-normed) reductionist, rationalist, and objectivist scientific method. Finally, the researcher will need to navigate the space between scholarship and advocacy, between research and practice, and between thinking and doing. We identify specific areas of research for each of the four issue areas listed in the preceding pages.

A. Increasing Equality in Power and Decision-Making

1. **Types of Power:** What can researchers contribute to our understanding of leadership by differentiating among various types of power and authority (e.g., traditional power, self-empowerment, personal authority, reciprocal empowerment)? How does context influence effective use of power? How does context influence perceptions of power and influence?

2. **Language of Power:** How can and should researchers examine the connection between the words used to describe power and male-normed perspectives of leadership? What is the connection between knowledge and power? How are contemporary leadership theories, frameworks, and models perpetuating male-normed perceptions of power and influence?

3. **Attitudes toward Power and Influence:** What can researchers from fields such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology add to our understanding of authority/influence relationships as compared to power relationships? What are the implications of research findings that men typically see power as vertically distributed and hold power close from a competitive mindset; when, in contrast, women often share power in the interest of collaboration?

4. **Demographic Distortions:** Recognizing that statistics generated to measure the influence of women across the globe provide only a partial picture, how can researchers more fully understand and document women's contributions to leadership in light of contextual norms, cultures, meanings, and standards at the local level? How can and should researchers use alternative research methods to illuminate demographic distortions?

5. **Discrimination and Second-Generation Gender Bias:** Given that subtle stereotypes and biases can be hard to detect, how can research contribute to having effective conversations around this bias, and ultimately work to re-envision gender and its relevance to power and decision-making?

6. **Handling Leadership Conflicts:** What can be learned from the concept of "soft power" when leaders are faced with tensions and conflicts? How can images of female power when facing conflict inform our understandings of effective leadership? To what extent does soft power work equally well when implemented by male and female leaders?

7. **Generational Shifts:** What leadership styles are most effective in a workforce that seeks to attract high-potential employees, particularly those shaped by the values of the millennial generation? In what ways is effective leadership being redefined by generational influences, and what are the implications of such shifts for women?

8. **Male and Female Decision-Making Processes:** Given that studies have long shown that women and men use different decision-making processes, what can be learned about the factors and motivators for women to consider pursuing top leadership roles?

B. Helping Girls and Young Women Become Leaders

1. **Finding the Female Voice:** What can be learned about the development of leadership aspirations and abilities in young girls? What can families and schools contribute to building girls' confidence in the value of their voices?

2. **Leadership Identity:** Building upon research that individuals become leaders by internalizing a leadership identity, what factors help girls and young women have confidence in their emerging leadership identity? What are curricular and co-curricular strategies for helping all individuals understand their talent patterns and develop a leadership identity as part of their schooling?

3. **Setting and Achieving Goals:** Recognizing the lack of role models, mentors, and coaches for girls in many parts of the world, what strategies can be used by families, schools, and organizations to help girls set and achieve goals as an important component of building self-efficacy?

4. **Life-Long Passion for Leadership:** To what extent is adolescent leadership behavior a predictor of adult acquisition and practice of leadership? How can the development of a growth mindset and self-confidence change the life trajectory for more girls toward leadership?

5. **Leadership Success Programs:** What can researchers glean and disseminate regarding "what works" to enhance girls' leadership skills — country-specific and international programs, perhaps involving a clearinghouse of successful youth programs?

6. **Adolescent Girls Advocacy and Leadership Initiative:** Recognizing the extreme challenges facing girls in the developing world, how should research build on the 2012 United Nations Foundation project to strengthen advocacy efforts and leadership capacity for adolescent girls and young women in Latin America and Africa?

7. **Obstacles in Transitioning from Girlhood:** How can research inform a constructive response to the findings published in 2009 by the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) that girls typically are able to voice their feelings and demonstrate a strong sense of self until they reach puberty, but then are torn between pressures to conform to cultural ideas of femininity?

C. Expanding Leadership Education and Development Worldwide

1. **Expanded Perspectives on Leadership:** In what ways can the focus of leadership research move beyond the traditional understandings inherited from predominantly male-oriented and highly individualistic language, frameworks, and organizational structures to understand what leadership education means to communities globally at the intersection of race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, etc.?

2. **Leadership for Social Change:** How can research more effectively focus attention on sustaining solutions that encourage attention to policies on safety, equality, education, and peace? What kinds of research could shift the focus of leadership effectiveness to addressing the basic needs and rights of the community, such as the right to an education that manifests in social change?

3. **Counteracting Belief in the "Natural Order":** Given religious and cultural realities in various parts of the world, how can researchers help nullify the widespread belief that men are naturally suited to lead and that women should be in supportive roles?

4. **Adjustments in Life-Span:** In what ways can research inform the growing interest of women in the "age of active wisdom," explained as a reexamination and realignment to address changes in leadership interests as they pertain to adjustments to environmental and life-span transformations?

5. **Addressing Victimization:** How can leadership be effectively developed (e.g., through cross-national mentorships) to address issues of safety and the victimization of women in countries engaged in war or genocide, and problems of human trafficking everywhere?

6. **Alternative Models for Leadership:** How can the effective intersection of women as leaders, activists, and partners in social movements worldwide be researched and supported? Similarly, what are the benefits of organizational structures that are de-centralized, self-governing, and based on commitment and common purpose?

7. **Women-Only Leadership Programs:** In what situations might it be more effective for women to participate in women-only leadership training, development, and education? Why?

D. Advancing Women in Leadership

1. **Leadership Aspirations:** What factors contribute to women being reluctant to "lean in" professionally, aspiring to top leadership positions? Among college students, what contributes to women being more invested in working for causes rather than seeking prominent, visible leadership posts?

2. **Going beyond Gender:** How can research address intersectional dimensions of identity — seeing gender within the broader context of other social factors (e.g., race, class, sexuality, disability, age, and embodiment)? In what ways can an inclusive language of leadership be developed whereby definitions move beyond the trait/transactional dichotomy?

3. **Cross-cultural Research and Social Justice:** How can leadership research be nuanced in ways that address the influence of different cultural perspectives on women's leadership aspirations and possibilities (e.g., regional and religious perspectives on women leaders)? In what ways can research expand our thinking about leadership to include activism, grassroots movements, etc.?

4. **Organizational Ecosystems:** What steps can individuals and organizations take to address "benign sexism" in order to better support women's leadership identity, aspirations, and role transitions?

5. **Ethics:** How can the contributions of an ethic of care and relational approaches to leadership be assessed? Do female leaders exhibit higher levels of authenticity and commitment to ethical decision-making? If so, what are the implications for women being motivated to lead and for organizations being more proactive to advance women into leadership?

6. **Shaping a Leadership Mindset:** What factors contribute to the "learning cycle" that is at the heart of becoming a leader? How can longitudinal research enhance our understanding of issues such as gender differences in the development of self-esteem over the life course? How do men and women view constructs such as ambition and aspiration?

7. **Sponsors and Bullies:** What strategies can women use to productively support the leadership development of other women? Conversely, what subtle or overt attitudes and behaviors by women sabotage other women's leadership journeys; how can those factors be addressed?

8. **Broadening the Dialogue:** How can different forms of inquiry enhance discussions about leadership effectiveness (e.g., considering racial/ethnic diversity issues or religious diversity alongside gender)? While leadership research is often predicated on social science, what insights might humanities scholars offer in advancing the field of leadership studies?

9. **Influence of the Media:** How can researchers document the impact of media stereotypes of men and women in leadership; particularly how this positively or negatively influences women's leadership aspirations?

CONCLUSION

As the challenges facing our world grow ever more numerous and complex, we believe that a focused and sustained research agenda is needed to assess what kinds of leadership can most effectively address these needs. Recognizing that women hold up "half the sky" and have enormous capacity to invest themselves in the common good, this *Asilomar Declaration and Call to Action on Women and Leadership* provides recommended action steps in various arenas. It also calls for research on gender and leadership in order to advance our understanding of best practices for effective leadership in multiple, diverse, and contested contexts. We are specifically interested in how women's abilities can be more fully developed, valued, and applied in seeking to enhance the well-being of all global citizens.

We believe that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development, and peace cannot be achieved. We are dedicated to unreservedly addressing obstacles that limit women's leadership and thus enhancing the further advancement of all women. Further, we recognize the limitations of our own perspectives and seek to continually grow, develop, understand, and act as global women leaders in the world. Whether we are researchers, activists, policy advisers, community leaders, mothers, fathers, teachers, or coaches, we know that each of us has only a partial understanding of the complex and multi-faceted issues surrounding gender inequality. We seek to work towards structural and societal change, and we recognize that what is best for some may not be best for all.

The declarations and calls to action within this document offer multiple ways forward for each of us. We urge you — the reader — to take up the challenge you are most passionate about. Join us in our quest to prepare and increase the number of effective women leaders within our communities, workplaces, governments, and beyond.

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