



Theory of Change

Our Mission

Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE) is a national organization that engages women to advocate for the right to live in a healthy environment.

WVE leverages the collective power of women's voices to change policies and corporate practices, creating healthy homes, workplaces, and communities by reducing environmental hazards that adversely impact women's health.

Core Principles

WVE works at the intersection of health, environmental and reproductive justice, and women's leadership, guided by the following core principles:

- Commitment to creating a world where all women are protected from toxic exposure in their home, workplaces, and communities.
- Commitment to ensuring that women have equal political, economic and social rights.
- Particular focus on the needs of women who are most affected by environmental hazards, including women of color, low-income women, women with occupational exposures, and women of reproductive age, who are especially vulnerable to toxic exposures. In addition, we engage women who self-identify as "green," and who may be early adopters and multipliers of green actions.
- Creation of opportunities to make women more aware of environmental health hazards, become engaged and mobilized to advocate for environmental health, and become change-agents as members of households, consumers, concerned citizens, and workers.
- Commitment to advancing social justice and equality. We believe all people have the right to a healthy environment and to protection from environmental hazards.

Why we Need Change

Women's health is disproportionately affected by uncontrolled environmental hazards found in the air we breathe at home and at work, and in consumer and commercial products we are exposed to throughout the day. In 2003, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that women, as compared to men, had in their bodies significantly higher levels of 10 of the 116 toxic chemicals they tested. Often times, risk assessments for chemicals are based on studies using male test subjects, so factors that make women different from men (such as higher body fat content, relatively smaller body size, pregnancy, hormonal changes throughout a woman's life, and gender division of labor) may not be taken into account.

All of this means that chemicals used in consumer goods (such as personal care products, cosmetics, household cleaning products, and more), as well as chemicals present in workplaces where women work (such as industrial cleaning products, glues or dyes used in manufacturing processes, and more) may be harmful to our health.

WVE recognizes these issues and believes that many women lack knowledge of the hazards we are exposed to, are without a forum for communicating our concerns and interests, and therefore often have not exercised their voice in the decision-making about regulating such hazards. It is estimated that women make 80% of all household buying decisions alone, making us a very powerful consumer group!

How WVE Makes Change Happen

To address this challenge, we have multiple strategies and targets for our work:

WVE staff and board lead and support policy, legislative and corporate advocacy campaigns that aim to integrate women's perspectives into environmental health policy agendas

- Frames environmental issues in terms of the impact on women's health
- Corresponds and negotiates directly with campaign targets (legislative or corporate)
- Leverages our network of women as advocates and activists

WVE raises women's awareness of environmental issues that affect their health

- Publishes reports that expose links between environmental hazards and adverse health effects
- Produces and distributes fact sheets to women through Internet, events
- Acts as a resource for other local, regional and national groups that are interested in using our information
- Uses the media to disseminate information to a broad spectrum of women
- Motivates women to make behavioral changes in their personal life

WVE engages women in advocacy campaigns for their right to live in a healthy environment

- Provides women opportunities to move from their own behavioral change to taking action (writing to members of Congress, making phone calls to company targets, holding house parties, organizing in their communities etc.)
- Develops tools for women to become advocates for policy and corporate change
- Mobilizes women through mass organizing tools such as the Internet
- Acts as a resource for other local, regional and national groups that seek to engage their members for women's environmental health
- Engages directly with subgroups of women from all backgrounds and walks of life (advocacy training, networking support, convening groups together, etc.)
- Engages women in campaigns grounded in do-able actions, focused on solutions
- Develops and cultivates women's leadership so they can educate and engage other women within their own spheres of influence (such as their PTA meeting, church group, book club, etc.) and in local, state and national policy advocacy
- Reaches out to local, regional and national groups that work with WVE's core constituencies and helps to amplify their voices and connect them to broader advocacy efforts

WVE provides opportunities for women to build networks for change

- Enhances and leverages women's social capital through social networking tools
- Creates shared social spaces that bring together a community of like-minded women for support and advocacy

- Enhances social connectedness so that women feel empowered to speak up and act together

WVE builds bridges across movements and works across issues to raise women's voices on environmental health

- Cultivates collaborations between a broad spectrum of organizations working toward environmental and reproductive justice and environmental and reproductive health, in order to support women-led advocacy on environmental health
- Supports bridge-building between groups of women most impacted by environmental hazards, including women of color, low-income women, women with occupational exposures, women of reproductive age who are particularly vulnerable to toxic exposures

WVE's vision of success

Women will have a distinct role and voice in advocacy on environmental health issues, and public and corporate policies will have been adopted that protect women's right to live in a healthy environment.

Specifically, WVE will have:

- Elevated public knowledge of how environmental hazards impact women's health
- Increased traction of women's environmental health issues on state and national policy agendas
- Changed women's behaviors as consumers and citizens
- Engaged thousands of women to take action
- Supported women in creating environment and health networks
- Achieved policy and corporate changes that reduce environmental hazards that impact women's health
- Secured the availability of affordable, safe and nontoxic products
- Motivated more people and organizations to consider women, the environment and justice simultaneously in their work