



WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH

OUR HEALTH. OUR FUTURE. TOXIC FREE.

Theory of Change

Our Mission

Women's Voices for the Earth is a national organization that works to eliminate toxic chemicals that harm women's health by changing consumer behaviors, corporate practices and government policies.

Core Principles

WVE works at the intersections of health, environmental and reproductive justice and is guided by the following core principles:

- **Justice:** Commitment to creating a world where all women are protected from toxic chemical exposure in their home, workplaces, and communities. WVE works to achieve a healthy environment and protection from toxic chemicals that may impact health and well-being.
- **Fairness:** Commitment to ensuring that women have equal political, economic and social participation and rights.
- **Equity:** Particular focus on the needs of women who are most affected by toxic chemicals, including women of color and indigenous women, low-income women, women workers with occupational exposures, and women of reproductive age, all of whom are especially vulnerable to toxic chemical exposures.
- **Engagement:** Creation of opportunities to help make women more aware of toxic chemical exposure, become engaged and mobilized to advocate for environmental health protections from governments and industries, and become change-agents as members of households, consumers, concerned citizens, and workers.

Why We Need Change

Women's health is disproportionately affected by uncontrolled environmental hazards found in the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the food they eat, and in consumer and commercial products they 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

Updated 09/06/2011

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 women's health.

WVE recognizes that women's health is influenced in complex ways by social, political, environmental, and economic impacts, as well as by biology. Many women lack knowledge of the hazards they are exposed to, are without a forum for communicating their concerns and interests, and therefore often have not exercised their voice in the decision-making about regulating such hazards; Simultaneously, WVE knows that women possess tremendous social, economic, and political power to influence environmental health policy-making. For example, it is estimated that women make 80% of all household buying decisions alone, making them a very powerful consumer group. Through their work, WVE leverages this power to improve environmental health outcomes for all women.

How WVE Makes Change Happen

To address this challenge, WVE has multiple strategies for their work:

WVE staff 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 their 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 their 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