

**“Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality”**  
*Guide to assist with film screenings*

**The Bahá’í International Community’s engagement in the discourse on gender equality**

Since the earliest days of the United Nations, the Bahá’í International Community (BIC) has been deeply involved in promoting the equality of women and men—as a reflection of one of the central principles of the Bahá’í Faith and the efforts of the worldwide Bahá’í community as a whole.

Through collaboration with the UN community, the BIC has sought to contribute the perspectives and experiences of the worldwide Bahá’í community to the discourse on gender equality. The BIC has supported efforts to protect the rights and promote the well-being of women and girls and has worked closely with the UN and civil society to create more effective and coherent gender equality mechanisms. Recognizing the role that all must play in the creation of a more just society, the BIC strives to bring the voices of civil society to bear on these discussions and debates at the UN.

Bahá’ís believe that the equality of women and men is a facet of human reality and not just a condition to be achieved for the common good. That which makes human beings human—their inherent dignity and nobility—is neither male nor female. The search for meaning, for purpose, for community; the capacity to love, to create, to persevere, has no gender. This has profound implications for the organization of every aspect of human society.

In localities across the world, Bahá’ís are endeavoring to establish patterns of community life and put in place institutional structures that reflect the belief in the fundamental equality of women and men.

**Selected excerpts from statements of the Bahá’í International Community on gender equality**

“Women and men are equal, and always have been. This is a spiritual truth whose expression in the world has been suppressed throughout most of history, owing in part to imbalanced systems and structures that have long favoured men’s progress and participation over women’s. While the equality of women and men is being increasingly acknowledged, this does not automatically eliminate the impediments that can obstruct its expression in every dimension of life.”

*“Toward Prosperity: The Role of Women and Men in Building a Flourishing World Civilization”, A Statement of the Bahá’í International Community to the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2017)*

“Moreover, a clear implication of the oneness of humanity is that women and men are equal. The growing recognition of both oneness and the equality of women and men is a hallmark of the modern age—and one that augurs well for the gradual emergence of a global civilization characterized by justice, reciprocity, and prosperity. Nevertheless, the full expression of oneness in every facet of life has yet to be realized; indeed, its realization may at times feel out of reach. That women and girls are often the hardest hit by the injustices engendered in the current

ordering of society is unsurprising given the historical forces that have given rise to that order. While growing acceptance of the principle of oneness was one of the greatest legacies of the twentieth century, many of the ideological underpinnings of prevalent societal systems are premised on values that are antithetical to oneness. Ideals of exclusion, belief in the inherent superiority of some groups over others, and reliance on adversarialism as a means of achieving progress are coded into the very DNA of the structures of society. What follows, then, is that the principle of oneness cannot be grafted superficially onto these; the systems and structures of society must be remolded to embody oneness.”

*“Creating the World Anew: Leaving No One Behind”, A Statement of the Bahá’i International Community to the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2019)*

“When viewed in its broader context, the discrimination against women is one of several symptoms of an ailing social order. Dynamics of domination and opposition have come to define many human relationships, including those between women and men. Efforts to achieve gender equality are frequently framed as battles for power. In its contentious expression, power generates inequality, violence, and exploitation, and cannot easily be oriented to the common or interpersonal good. In a system that is set up like a zero-sum game, it may make sense to fight for access to limited resources and for positions of privilege. Yet, is a zero-sum paradigm the pinnacle of social organization? Can systems and structures be created that allow all people to thrive concurrently? What expressions of power would give rise to such systems and structures?”

*“Developing New Dynamics of Power to Transform the Structures of Society”, A Statement of the Bahá’i International Community to the 64th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2020)*

### **Background on “Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality”**

The film, “Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality”, touches on the lives of individuals from diverse communities around the world, including Colombia, India, Malaysia, the United States, and Zambia and their experiences in applying the principle of gender equality to their lives, contributing to the goals articulated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The aim of the BIC in creating this film is to showcase the spirit of diverse initiatives that have steadily contributed to cultural transformation at the local level in creating more equitable societies. It seeks to instill a sense of hope and optimism as the international community reflects on the advances made since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and to reinvigorate commitment to action in realizing the vital requirement of gender equality.

### **Some guiding questions for discussions**

- Do you have any comments in relation to the themes in the film, in particular the role of education, the role of men and boys, and the role religion can play in advancing gender equality?
- How has gender equality and the advancement of women in your country advanced over the past 25 years?

- How does discrimination against women limit the ability of men and boys to develop to their full potential? How does it impact the progress and well-being of society as a whole?
- How will progress towards equality transform various facets of human society: the development of intellectual life; the practice of governance; the allocation of material resources; the condition of the family?
- How can just relationships at all levels of society be built? What does that look like?

### Helpful links

- “Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality” [Film](#)
- “Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality” [Trailer](#)

*Recent statements of the Bahá’í International Community on gender equality*

- [Toward Prosperity: The Role of Women and Men in Building a Flourishing World Civilization](#) (2017)
- [Beyond Mere Economics: A Moral Inquiry into the Roots of Empowerment](#) (2018)
- [Creating the World Anew: Leaving No One Behind](#) (2019)
- [Developing New Dynamics of Power to Transform the Structures of Society](#) (2020)

*Stories exploring how Bahá’í communities have seen the principles of gender equality outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action begin to take form in neighborhoods and villages around the world (selected communities also showcased in the film)*

- [Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality: Riohacha, Colombia](#)
- [Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality: Mwinilunga, Zambia](#)
- [Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality: Kejau, Malaysia](#)
- [Glimpses into the Spirit of Gender Equality: Mwinilunga, Zambia](#)