



# **‘Celebrating the Journey of ACWW and FCE’**

**Oregon Association for Family and Community  
Education**

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## **Celebrating the Journey of ACWW and FCE**

### **Items for Preparation**

- Leader Guide- familiarize yourself with the leader guide
- There is a lot of information in the leader guide, and it is not meant to be read word for word, use as a GUIDE for your presentation

### **Class needs:**

- Pencils and Copies of the quiz on page 10 for each member
  - The answers are on page 11
- PowerPoint- if you choose to use PowerPoint you will need a projector, computer, screen, and power cords

## **Celebrating the Journey of FCE and ACWW**

In this 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of National FCE, I want to give you a bit of history about NaFCE and our relationship with ACWW.

Formally formed on the eve of an international conference, National Home Demonstration Council, as we were first known, has maintained a keen interest in international affairs throughout its history. Friendships with women from other countries formed at the 1936 Associated Country Women of the World Conference in Washington D.C. laid the foundation for continued participation in international programs of interest to women and truly set in motion a “DREAM WALKING”.

In 1929 Lady Aberdeen, of England, then President of the International Council of Women, invited representatives of rural women’s organizations from all over the world to meet with the Council of Women. The following year at a Conference in Vienna a Liaison Committee of Rural Women’s Organizations was set up to consider matters of special concern to Rural Women. They met as a standing committee of the International Conference of Women. At that time there were twenty-eight countries represented by thirty-four organizations. Several delegates from the US were present as well as representatives from the Extension Service. During the next three years through intensive activity by the committee, contacts were made in Switzerland, Holland, and America. In 1933 the second Triennial meeting was held in Stockholm Sweden, Mrs. Conant, from the USA, was elected as one of eight Vice Presidents. During this conference, a major step of changing the Liaison Committee into an independent organization was taken.

By the end of June 1933 ACWW was, in lady Aberdeen’s own words, “duly constituted, and christened and launched upon the world.”

The third Triennial Conference was held in Washington DC in 1936, with 7000 US women greeting representatives from other countries. It was on the eve of this meeting that the National Home Demonstration Council came into being. On the way to this conference, a few state organizations formally formed while traveling to Washington DC on train cars! What drive and determination those women had!

As a bit of information National Home Demonstration Council changed its name to National Extension Homemakers Council in 1963, and the name was changed to National Assoc. for Family and Community Education in the 1980's. I will refer to the organization in this presentation as NEHC, but please know I am referring to National FCE.

Several state organizations had affiliated with ACWW before the NEHC was organized. NEHC voted to join ACWW in 1937, at its first annual meeting. Mrs. Ora (Guy) Roop the first president of NEHC was elected ACWW Vice President for the USA at the fourth Triennial Conference of ACWW in London in 1939.

Society dues were incredibly low, and funding was going to be an issue! One of the most inspired ideas to secure reliable long-term funding for the new organization came from Mrs. Drage, who suggested each member should contribute a penny a year in addition to the official dues paid by societies. Launched in 1936 as the Million-Member Fund the idea was hailed with enthusiasm in most countries, and the USA Societies soon dubbed it the "Pennies for Friendship" It was known by this name until 2022 when it was changed to the Rural Women in Action Fund and continues to provide a major part of ACWW's income.

In 1939 at the Triennial in London, delegates expressed concerns that enthusiasm might lag in the organization during the three years between world conferences. A committee was set up to promote interest in ACWW among societies in the United States and to serve as a vehicle through which the work might be continued.

The founding meeting was held at Pennsylvania State College in August of 1939 and the group called itself the 'United States Liaison Committee of ACWW'. Members of the committee were the twenty-one constituent societies of ACWW at that time. There were articles of agreement set up then that set up a cooperative relationship between the US Constituent Societies, each of which kept its individual rights to maintain direct contact with ACWW. The purpose of the committee was to bring the USA ACWW Societies into closer relationship and to further the aims and work of ACWW in a more effective way. This was the birth of the Country Women's Council as we know it today. The name was formally changed in 1947.

## **What is ACWW and what does it do?**

Established in 1929, the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) brings together women's organizations across the globe to collaboratively address shared challenges. For almost one hundred years, ACWW has continued its commitment to supporting rural women by providing information, passing resolutions, and awarding grants. The issues addressed by ACWW remain as pertinent today as they were at the time of its founding.

According to the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) website: “was formed in 1929 to bring together rural women and their organizations all over the world...”. Before ACWW was formed, rural women’s organizations operated independently. When these groups began communicating, they united to pursue shared goals. In 1929 Mrs. Alfred Watt (Madge) chaired the first International Conference of Rural Women, this conference was set up to correspond with an exchange of ideas between rural women in various parts of the world. In 1933 in Stockholm Sweden the Associated Country Women of the World was created from the liaison committee of rural women’s organizations. In 1947, ACWW began adopting resolutions in Amsterdam to improve the lives of rural women around the world after the war.

Today the ACWW website states: “we have 450 associations from 82 countries and have passed more than 180 resolutions by popular vote with the purpose of empowerment of rural women”. This continues to be our driving priority.” According to ACWW: “Rural Women are the backbone of families, communities, and nations, but they suffer the worst impacts of climate change and conflict, go unheard in legislation, and remain unprotected and unsupported.” Our membership has grown to over nine million.

## **WHO DOES ACWW ADVOCATE FOR?**

Associated Country Women of the World advocates issues faced by **rural women of the world**. Rural women can face greater hurdles compared to non-rural women. These include socioeconomic disadvantages, lower academic achievements, reduced general healthcare, increased birth rates while having limited access to reproductive healthcare to name some the

disadvantages they can face. Some of those issues do overlap into a non-rural setting, a global campaign '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence', is supported and promoted by ACWW, the campaign helps to protect women and girls of all walks of life and inform everyone about the dangers faced by women and girls on a global level. The annual campaign starts on November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on December 10, International Human Rights Day. The campaign was begun in 1991 and continues each year.

At the Triennial World Conference held every 3 years, resolutions presented by the organization's member societies are voted on by the society's delegates and passed by majority. If passed, all the member societies are bound to act in support of their achievement. While a recommendation if passed is a suggestion to member societies for action.

### **WHERE IS ACWW LOCATED?**

ACWW's Constitution requires its principal office to be in England or Wales; the Central Office is in London (The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR). The organization has its member societies broken down into nine global areas and each have its own Area President.

The areas are:

- 1) Canada
- 2) The Caribbean, Central and South America
- 3) South East and East Asia
- 4) East, West and Central Africa
- 5) Europe
- 6) Central and South Asia
- 7) Southern Africa
- 8) Pacific
- 9) The United States of America

In addition to the Area President, each member society can nominate society Coordinators. The coordinators will help to put ACWW's projects, information, fundraising, and events on a local level.

### **ACWW's WHY?**

Rural women! Rural women work extremely hard but often earn extraordinarily little, they are often discriminated against and in some cases, they are not allowed ownership of land. Rural women are also often not allowed control of the money they earn. When rural women are empowered through education, employment, and other benefits, it can lead to alleviating the poverty of the individual woman, but also their family and community. ACWW knows this, through their initiatives over the past ninety years or so they have helped many communities.

### **ADVOCACY**

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines advocacy as: the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating. ACWW has a history of advocating for the world's rural women, through grants, resolutions, and recommendations.

### **THE ACWW STRATEGY:**

"ACWW will continue to use its Consultative Status with the United Nations and its Agencies to amplify the voices of Rural Women and highlight the issues they raise at the international level. Amongst other policies, we will prioritize the following: With the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) at the United Nations, we will advocate for the importance of family farming, women's land rights, Indigenous seed protection, food security, and food sovereignty. At UNESCO we will advocate for equitable access to quality education at all levels for women in all their diversity, the importance of traditional and inherited knowledge, Indigenous languages, and global citizenship. We will use our access at the Human Rights Council to promote understanding and implementation of CEDAW for women everywhere, and through projects like "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence", "International Day of Rural Women 2026", ACWW Food Security, and Women Walk the World.

## **THE ACWW PROJECTS and HOW THEY ARE DECIDED**

Under its 2022–2026 strategic plan, developed by the ACWW Board of Trustees, ACWW focuses on three core areas of development to increase its impact in rural communities and better support women most who are most at risk.

- Climate Smart Agriculture
- Rural Women's Health
- Education and Community Development

These three core projects areas will allow ACWW to use their resources in the best possible manner. A small snapshot of each core project area shows just how important each one is. Projects in 2024 include working with Reaching the Unreached, a program that facilitates the re-entry of young girls in Tanzania who have dropped out of school, Women's Organization for Rural Development (WORD) a 12 month program that works with 50 women in five villages in India teaching sustainable farming practices, Empowerment for Marginalized Communities (EMAC) is a rural poor women's health and educational program working to change ideas about gender based violence in its many forms.

### **Climate Smart Agriculture**

Across low-income countries, women are filling roles in management and food production to the tune of forty eight percent, yet they are disproportionally challenged by rural men. Rural Women are more likely to face food insecurity, access to land, market information, and resources. They can also lack decision making power.

With a commitment for promoting Climate Smart Agriculture and small project funding, ACWW is helping rural women farmers to have access to information helping them to adapt to the challenge of climate change, choosing indigenous seed varieties for drought resistant crops, learning about irrigation systems, and harvesting rainwater as examples.

## **Rural Women's Health**

This core project area is focused on increasing rural women's access to good and affordable health care, including comprehensive information, maternal and reproductive care, medicines, and local health services. Traditionally women have always had a lower standard of health care. There has been a focus on maternal and reproductive care, leaving out other issues that impact women of all ages. ACWW is dedicated to improving rural women health by ensuring they have reliable access to complete, inclusive, and high-quality health care.

## **Education and Community Development**

The United Nations has identified two-thirds of adults who cannot read or write as women. This statistic underscores the importance of education in rural communities around the world. When rural women are unable to complete basic education, their earning potential is reduced, and their families often experience poorer health and nutrition outcomes. ACWW wants to change this for rural women.

## **FUNDING FOR CORE PROJECTS**

In 2022 ACWW changed its funding model, having all donations going into the Rural Women in Action Fund, supporting all ACWW's work of projects, awareness raising, education and advocacy. This model allows for adding strategic partners and external funding as well as donations from member societies and individual members.

ACWW is combining a grassroots approach and bringing change to the systems of inequality and oppression in an attempt to bring about lasting progress to the plight of the rural women of the world.

I have tried to give you a brief history of ACWW and FCE, how it all began and how it evolved. Where the story goes is up to each one of us. Every one of us in this room has benefitted many times over from the work of the women who have gone before us.

In an excerpt from the NEHC history book “Education in Action” it was noted that “If the small group of women who met in Washington DC in 1936 to form a national organization should attend a meeting of the NEHC/NaFCE today they would indeed “see a dream walking”!

**So how can we/you keep the “DREAM WALKING”?**

Questions?

Comments?

Correct questionnaire.

## **ACWW QUIZ**

1. What do the letters ACWW stand for?
2. What is one way FCE supported ACWW?
3. Where is the World Headquarters for ACWW located?
4. There are over \_\_\_\_\_ ACWW members in the world.
5. How often does the World Organization meet?
6. How does ACWW make decisions on what will be the major projects for women, families, and communities?
7. How does ACWW develop new projects?
8. What year was ACWW founded?
9. What is the key concept behind each resolution?
10. The ACWW has Consultancy status to what major group of leaders?

## Handout # 2

### ACWW QUIZ ANSWERS

1. What do the letters ACWW stand for?

**Associated Country Women of the World**

2. What is one way FCE supported ACWW?

**It is a member society of ACWW**

3. Where is the World Headquarters for ACWW located?

**London England**

4. There are over \_\_\_\_\_ ACWW members in the world.\

**9 million**

5. How often does the World Organization meet?

**Every 3 years**

6. How does ACWW make decisions on what will be the major projects for women, families, and communities?

**a. The proposed projects are submitted to ACWW before the deadline and the final decision on which applications are successful is made by ACWW's Board of Trustees**

7. What are the 3 funding areas for projects?

**1) Climate Smart Agriculture**

**2) Rural Women's Health**

**3) Education and Community Development**

8. What year was ACWW founded?

**1929**

9. What is the key concept behind each resolution?

**Advocacy**

10. The ACWW has Consultancy status to what major group of leaders?

**United Nations**