

## Preface

At the World Economic Forum in the Middle East held in May 2006, participants from member countries discussed some of the major institutional hindrances to women's empowerment and what needs to be done to facilitate women's empowerment. They agreed that for women attempting to empower themselves, overcoming powerful social and cultural norms is the only way forward. For example, a woman may have the legal right to work but in some countries, she must have her husband's permission to work in any organization. This is a customary or informal law. Similarly, while under Islamic law, a husband's property must be divided equally between surviving spouses and children, in practice, this does not always happen. Hence, significant gender gaps exist between men and women in areas of economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, and health and well-being in most countries in the Islamic world.

In the edited book *Institutions and Gender Empowerment in the Global Economy*, these issues affecting women's empowerment in developing and developed countries have been raised and critically analyzed.

The first draft of the proposal for this book was prepared by K.C. Roy at the Centre for Gender Relations and Women's Studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada where the author spent 3 weeks as a visiting fellow in October 2004 under a special studies program leave approved by The University of Queensland where he is currently employed.

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