



GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

# WOMEN in the WORLD TODAY

# Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

## FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

“If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights once and for all. Let us not forget that among those rights are the right to speak freely — and the right to be heard.”

— Hillary Rodham Clinton, September 1995 at the United Nations’  
Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing



This book is based on the 12 critical areas of concern identified at the Beijing Conference:

- 1 The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
- 2 Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training
- 3 Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services
- 4 Violence against women
- 5 The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
- 6 Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
- 7 Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
- 8 Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
- 9 Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
- 10 Stereotyping of women and inequality in women’s access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media
- 11 Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment
- 12 Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child

GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

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WOMEN  
in the  
WORLD  
TODAY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS

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**WOMEN in the WORLD TODAY**

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# P R E F A C E

**I**n September 1995, I joined representatives from 189 countries for the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. That event still stands out as one of the great honors and highlights of my life.

That 1995 historic gathering brought together people of all backgrounds and beliefs to voice our support for women's rights and put women's issues at the forefront of the global agenda. Together, we outlined a Plan of Action to improve the condition of women and girls worldwide.

In the years since Beijing, advocates, activists and governments around the world have used that plan to advance opportunity and progress for women. The good news is that we have accomplished a great deal. More girls are enrolled in school, more women hold political office, and more laws exist to protect vulnerable populations.

Unfortunately, we have a long way yet to go. Sometimes by custom, sometimes by law, millions of women worldwide are still denied their rights. They are excluded from public life in their societies, subjected to violence or barred from getting an education, taking a job or driving a car.

This is morally wrong. It offends our basic sense of justice and fairness. But it is unacceptable for another reason too — because it keeps countries from making real progress in creating jobs, sparking economic growth and giving all their people an opportunity to create a better future. No country can advance when half its population is left behind.

But when women are empowered to exercise their human rights and afforded equal

opportunities, amazing things happen. The benefits don't stop with an individual woman. They spread to entire communities and countries. Simply helping girls stay in school longer, for example, has a powerful effect. Birth rates drop. So does the number of young children who die. HIV infections, domestic violence and female cutting all decline. And, in nations divided by violent conflict, the chances for lasting peace go up when women are part of the solution. Women play important roles as peacekeepers, as they



**U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton meets Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon, Burma, in 2011. Suu Kyi, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1991), spent nearly 20 years under house arrest. Released in 2010, she has engaged with the ruling military junta on reforms. She and members of her National League for Democracy won parliamentary seats in 2012 by-elections.**

did in Northern Ireland and Liberia. In short, women around the world sustain families, build communities and knit the social fabric together.

At the State Department, we believe elevating the status of women and girls in their societies is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do. Women and girls are often a community's greatest untapped resource, which makes investing in them a powerful and effective way to promote international development and our diplomatic agenda.

We're working to address the issues that impede women's progress and putting critical tools into women's hands. For example, a cellphone can transform a woman's life by giving her a way to safely deposit her savings or receive payments through mobile banking, or by helping her connect to markets outside her village. Yet many women lack access to cellphones and the benefits they offer, so we launched the mWomen partnership to reduce the gender gap in mobile technology. And the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves is providing a standard for safe, efficient, nonpolluting stoves to women. Clean cookstoves will improve the health of women and their families, the quality of the air they breathe, as well as their economic conditions.

Every time I travel, I meet extraordinary women who are driving change in their communities, often in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Women like Nasim Baji in Pakistan, who only needed a \$10 microfinance loan to start a jewelry-making business that today employs 30 women in her community. Or women like Sina Vann, a Cambodian who escaped sex slavery to become a freedom fighter for thousands of girls — some as young as four — who are held and sold against their will. I visited the rescue center that Sina runs in 2010, and I was deeply touched by the courage and resilience I saw in those little girls.

This book tells Nasim's and Sina's stories, and those of other women leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, educators and politicians leading change in their communities.

Women in the World Today shows how far we have come since 1995. Each chapter reflects one of the 12 points in the action plan we developed in Beijing. It also explores what we need to do now, so that all countries can fully benefit from the wisdom, compassion and energy women bring to every aspect of society.

I hope the stories you read here inspire you to take action in your community and help move us closer to that goal. It could be as simple as sharing stories of the women in this book and in your own life with others. You could volunteer with a women's organization in your hometown or start your own project. Above all, you can make sure the girls in your life grow up feeling safe, valued and powerful.

In Beijing, we envisioned a world where women and men have equal access to opportunities — a world where women's voices would be recognized and respected. We are still pursuing that vision, with more energy and enthusiasm than ever. Together, we can realize a future where women's rights are unquestionably, unshakably and permanently recognized as full and equal human rights.



Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State

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**Hillary Rodham Clinton** was sworn in as the 67th secretary of state of the United States on January 21, 2009. Secretary Clinton joined the State Department after nearly four decades in public service as an advocate, attorney, first lady and senator.

# Solutions to Global Challenges Require Women's Participation

Interview with Ambassador Melanne Verveer

**I**n April 2009, Melanne Verveer was appointed ambassador-at-large for global women's issues by President Obama to promote women's empowerment in U.S. foreign policy. She shares her passion for achieving the political, economic and social empowerment of women in this interview.

**Q: You are the first ambassador-at-large for global women's issues. Why are these issues so important to address now?**

**Ambassador Verveer:** There is recognition today that we cannot possibly solve our global challenges, whether they concern the environment, governance, economic policy or security, unless women are full participants. We have to move "women's issues" from the margins to the mainstream and recognize that the issues are not only about women's roles, but are about the kind of world we want to create. To the extent that women participate, succeed and help make a difference, everyone benefits — men and women, boys and girls.

**Q: Why is women's participation so vital to the well-being of all societies?**

**MV:** There is a mountain of data that correlates investments in women to poverty reduction — even to decreases in corruption — which I think we need to take very seriously. Similarly, there are studies on the consequences of gender inequality.



Melanne Verveer is the first ambassador-at-large for the U.S. State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues.

For example, the World Economic Forum puts out an annual report called the Gender Gap Report. It measures the progress of men and women in terms of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, political participation, health and survival. Where men and women are closer to equal achievement in all of those areas, those countries are far better off.

Where that gap is wider, it's a different story. This has been repeated in study after study. We have to pay attention to the hard data, and what the data tell us is this is the smart thing to do, to invest in women and provide them with opportunities to fully participate in their societies.

**Q: In 1995 the landmark U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing. What did it accomplish, and is it still relevant?**

**MV:** It brought together 189 countries to really look at the progress of women and specifically to adopt a Platform for Action. That Platform for Action focused on a number of critical areas, including women's access to education, health care, economic and political participation; women's ability to be free from violence; to have legal rights; the girl child; the role of women in conflict societies; and the role of women in peace and security. It was a major, ambitious blueprint that the United States and 188 other countries signed on to, making commitments to go back to our own countries to chart progress for women and girls. That was significant then, and it continues to be extremely significant today. Fifteen years later, the Platform for Action is still the blueprint against which many of our countries, NGOs and others measure the advancement of women. There has been a lot of progress, but there still are challenges. Laws have been passed. They haven't always been implemented, but much has changed for the better.

**Q: Where has the most progress been made, and where does the world still have work to do?**

**MV:** Girls' education is in a much better place than it was when the Beijing Platform was adopted, but we are not where we need to be. While more and more girls are in primary school, we don't have anywhere near the numbers with access to secondary education. Investing in a girl determines what her future will be like — and

her potential family's future — her economic possibilities, her health and her children's education. More women are being elected to parliaments, but the numbers are still below what they should be, given that women make up half the population of the world and it is important to have their experiences and talents involved in policymaking.

Economically, women are participating in more significant ways. Microcredit, for example, has had a transformative impact, lifting up the poorest of the poor and creating livelihoods so people can sustain themselves and their families. Laws have been passed dealing with violence against women, family law reform and other intractable issues. Now such laws must be better implemented and enforced. There is a definite record of progress. Governments, civil society and those who have charted this path toward a better future can take justifiable pride in that, but we have to keep at it to reach our goals.

**Q: What are the most important emerging global women's issues?**

**MV:** We still have an agenda to complete. We have to be more creative. One of the challenges is to bring new tools to the table, tools that do a better job enhancing economic progress. Microcredit is one of the great financial tools, but we need broader financial inclusion: savings and other ways that poor people can be insured against cataclysms of one kind or another. Financial tools can bring creative solutions, as can technology. I personally think that mobile technology has the potential to be as transformative as microcredit has been. Cellphones are more accessible to the poor. Cellphone applications are being developed to help improve health care. The cellphone is being used for banking, teaching literacy, safeguarding women from violence and creating economic opportunities.



Melanne Vermeer with PepsiCo Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Indra Nooyi.

There was and is an environmental component of the Beijing Agenda, but climate change itself was not specified. It is something that we have come to understand better in the time that's elapsed since 1995. Here again we see the role that women have to play, particularly in regions most severely affected by climate change and vulnerable to natural disasters such as drought or floods. We need to engage women as agents for adaptation and mitigation.

One important example concerns cookstoves. The black carbon emitted from dirty cookstoves — on which millions of poor people cook — is detrimental to the health of millions of people. The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves is creating a market for low-emissions cookstoves, to help reduce the damaging health and environmental impacts of black carbon. It's an economic empowerment issue because selling and maintaining cookstoves is a new green industry, especially for women. Cooking is not the major contributor to climate change, but low-emissions cookstoves can address one aspect of it.

**Q: What role must men play in ensuring women’s empowerment and advancement around the world?**

**MV:** Men have a central, critical, important role to play. Women’s progress has never come through women’s efforts alone. We cannot possibly solve some of the most serious challenges that women confront — the inequality of women around the globe, the scourge of violence against them — unless men are involved in solutions. The way boys are raised, the image of what a man should be and how that’s presented, are opportunities to develop good habits in the next generation. We know the critical role that religious leaders — who are mostly men — can play. We need political will and enlightened male leaders at the highest levels of government, multilateral institutions and companies to become full participants in the advancement of women’s empowerment.

**Q: The United States does not have a perfect record on women’s issues. Our Congress has a lower percentage of female elected officials than some foreign parliaments and has not ratified the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Domestic violence and human trafficking are issues in the United States. Is the United States in a position to lead the world on women’s empowerment?**

**MV:** We have a lot of work to do at home, as every other country does. In no country in the world are men and women equal. But I think the fact that we address many of our problems or are working at addressing them does certainly resonate internationally. We’ve created legislation to combat violence against women, which was first adopted in the 1990s. Our trafficking law wasn’t passed until 2000, but we worked at it and it is a model for the world. It may help other countries to see the path we took to address the

challenges, how we created coalitions, and why we set prevention, prosecution and protection as lynchpins in the violence against women law and in the trafficking law (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000).

I often talk about the women who, in 1848, traveled to that first equal rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. And I often think of the diary of a young girl who looked back on the course that she chose to take, which was to get in a stagecoach, leave her home and to make that trip. She did it because in the United States at the time, women could not vote. She could not keep her meager earnings — if she had meager earnings. She could not access formal education; she could not get a divorce if she found herself in a terrible marriage. She knew life needed to be better and she went off on that journey to the equal rights convention not knowing, as she said, if anybody else would be on that road. Well, we know what progress our country has made. We are still on that road. Women everywhere are on that journey and we need each other. And — just as importantly — we need good men to join us as they, too, traveled to the Equal Rights Convention. We may be in different places on the journey. The United States has come a long way from 1848, when that young woman decided to make the trip to Seneca Falls, but we still have a ways to go. All over the world, women who face difficult situations need to chart progress. So we’re not perfect, but we work at these issues and in many ways we have succeeded and can help others address similar challenges.





CHAPTER

# 1



## WOMEN AND POVERTY

Women constitute a majority of the poor and are often poorest of the poor. A woman hugs her granddaughter in their shack near Castelli, Chaco, Argentina.

# WOMEN AND POVERTY

*By* Geeta Rao Gupta

**W**omen constitute a majority of the poor and are often the poorest of the poor. The societal disadvantage and inequality they face because they are women shapes their experience of poverty differently from that of men, increases their vulnerability, and makes it more challenging for them to climb out of poverty. In other words, poverty is a gendered experience — addressing it requires a gender analysis of norms and values, the division of assets, work and responsibility, and the dynamics of power and control between women and men in poor households.

In most societies, gender norms define women's role as largely relegated to the home, as mother and caretaker, and men's role as responsible for productive activities outside the home. These norms influence institutional policies and laws that define women's and men's access to productive resources such as education, employment, land and credit. There is overwhelming evidence from around the world to show that girls and women are more disadvantaged than boys and men in their access to these valued productive resources. There is also ample evidence to show that the responsibilities of women and the challenges they face within poor households and communities are different from those of men. Persistent



gender inequality and differences in women's and men's roles greatly influence the causes, experiences and consequences of women's poverty. Policies and programs to alleviate poverty must, therefore, take account of gender inequality and gender differences to effectively address the needs and constraints of both poor women and men.

**Pakistani women are paid about US\$2 for every 1,000 bricks they make at this brick kiln in Multan, Pakistan.**



## Women's Experience of Poverty

Girls and women in poor households bear a disproportionate share of the work and responsibility of feeding and caring for family members through unpaid household work. In poor rural households, for example, women's work is dominated by activities such as firewood, water and fodder collection, care of livestock and subsistence agriculture. The drudgery of women's work and its time-intensive demands contribute to women's "time poverty" and greatly limit poor women's choice of other, more productive income-earning opportunities.

Faced with difficult time-allocation choices, women in poor households will

often sacrifice their own health and nutrition, or the education of their daughters, by recruiting them to take care of siblings or share in other household tasks. This is just one piece of a pattern of gendered discrimination in the allocation of resources in poor households. Evidence shows that the gender gaps in nutrition, education and health are greater in poorer households. This lack of investment in the human capital of girls perpetuates a vicious, intergenerational cycle of poverty and disadvantage that is partly responsible for the intractable nature of poverty.

Women in Gadabeji, Niger, cope with a food crisis created by drought. Worldwide, women are driven further into poverty by inflated food prices.

## Why Focus on Women in Poverty?

A focus on poor women as distinct from men in efforts to reduce poverty is justified because women's paid and unpaid work is crucial for the survival of poor households.

Women are economic actors: They produce and process food for the family; they are the primary caretakers of children, the elderly and the sick; and their income and labor are directed toward children's education, health and well-being. In fact, there is incontrovertible evidence from a number of studies conducted during the 1980s that mothers typically spend their income on food and health care for children, which is in sharp contrast to men, who spend a higher proportion of their income for personal needs. A study conducted in Brazil, for example, found that the positive effect on the probability that a child will survive in urban Brazil is almost 20 times greater when the household income is controlled by a woman rather than by a man (Quisumbing et al., 1995).

Yet women face significant constraints in maximizing their productivity. They often do not have equal access to productive inputs or to markets for their goods. They own only 15 percent of the land worldwide, work longer hours than men and earn lower wages. They are over-represented among workers in the informal labor market, in jobs that are seasonal, more precarious and not protected by labor standards.

Despite this, policies and programs that are based on notions of a typical household as consisting of a male bread-winner and dependent women and children often target men for the provision of productive resources and



A child “rag picker” collects refuse for recycling at a garbage dump in Hyderabad, India.

services. Such an approach widens the gender-based productivity gap, negatively affects women's economic status, and does little to reduce poverty. Addressing these gender biases and inequalities by intentionally investing in women as economic agents, and doing so within a framework of rights that ensures that women's access to and control over productive resources is a part of their entitlement as citizens, is an effective and efficient poverty reduction strategy.

## Ways to Reduce Women's Poverty

Over the years there have been many efforts to reduce women's poverty. Investments to increase agricultural productivity, improve livestock management and provide livelihood opportunities are key ways to address the needs of poor rural women. Another, more popular and effective intervention that currently reaches millions of women worldwide is microfinance — small loans and other financial services for poor women who



have no access to the formal banking system. Microfinance programs have succeeded in increasing the incomes of poor households and protecting them against complete destitution.

Yet another strategy to improve the economic status of poor women has been to increase women's access to and control of land. Women who own or control land can use the land to produce food or generate income, or as collateral for credit.

These strategies are promising and offer potential for meeting the international community's commitment to gender equality as demonstrated most recently through the inclusion of Goal 3 in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). All that remains now is for that commitment to be transformed into action.

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**Geeta Rao Gupta** is a senior fellow at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Development Program and an internationally recognized expert on gender and development issues, including women's health, economic empowerment, poverty alleviation and gender equality. Prior to joining the foundation, Rao Gupta was president of the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). She also serves on the Steering Committee of aids2031, an international initiative commissioned by UNAIDS, USAID's Advisory Committee for Voluntary Foreign Aid and the boards of the Moriah Fund, the Nike Foundation, the MAC AIDS Fund and the Rural Development Institute.

**A girl helps a woman prepare food in Guatemala.**

PROFILE

# Roshaneh Zafar

Social Entrepreneur Empowers Women

*By* Shafqat Munir



A young Pakistani woman turns social entrepreneur, establishes Kashf Foundation, and through microfinancing enables impoverished Pakistani women to improve their lives.

“**Y**ou feel really great when you enable poor families to transform, change their mindset and bring up their children with a concept of financial management at the grass-roots level. This can ensure a decent living for them,” says Pakistani entrepreneur Roshaneh Zafar.

Since 1996, Zafar’s small microfinance initiative at Kashf Foundation, the first of its kind in Pakistan, has changed the lives of more than a million people in 26 districts in Pakistan by extending small credits worth a total of U.S. \$202 million currently, according to the Kashf Foundation website ([www.kashf.org](http://www.kashf.org)). Zafar successfully runs a fully chartered bank, the Kashf Microfinance Bank, with 31 branches in three provinces, Punjab, Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. MIX Market ([www.MIXMarket.org](http://www.MIXMarket.org)), a microfinance information data and analysis service, reports that in 2009 Kashf Microfinance Bank had 14,192 active borrowers, a gross loan portfolio of U.S. \$5 million, with deposits of \$3.8 million by 42,073 depositors. The average balance per borrower is \$350. This grass-roots bank, like the foundation, is called “Kashf” — “miracle” or “revelation” in Urdu — to evoke the process of self-discovery.

Zafar, who attended Yale University and the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, has the required financial knowledge and skills. She was a specialist on women in development and community for the U.N. Development Programme and

the World Bank. She has the passion of a women’s rights activist. An early endeavor was co-founding Bedari, a women’s crisis intervention center in Islamabad. The daughter of a renowned jurist and constitutional expert, S.M. Zafar, Roshaneh Zafar started from a one-room office next to her father’s law offices 15 years ago. She sees social entrepreneurship as her lifetime mission.

“I am proud of building an institution. I am passionate about transforming the lives of families, bringing them out of poverty,” she says. She believes that economic well-being leads to policies that favor women’s development, and without giving economic opportunities to women, social development and empowerment are hardly possible.



Roshaneh Zafar, center, meets with some of her microcredit clients in Pakistan.

Both men and women must work together to increase family incomes and contribute to development of the community and the country: Only then can Pakistani society become gender-sensitive, she says.

“Economic empowerment of women working through families can guarantee a change in lives and livelihoods of the poor. Microfinancing women-led families is a sustainable way to ensure women’s development,” Zafar says.

The realities of the poverty-ridden and resource-constrained women in villages in remote parts of Pakistan, and a will to help change their fate, prompted Zafar to quit her World Bank job in 1995 and enter social entrepreneurship: “While working with the World Bank, I realized that until we involve women and

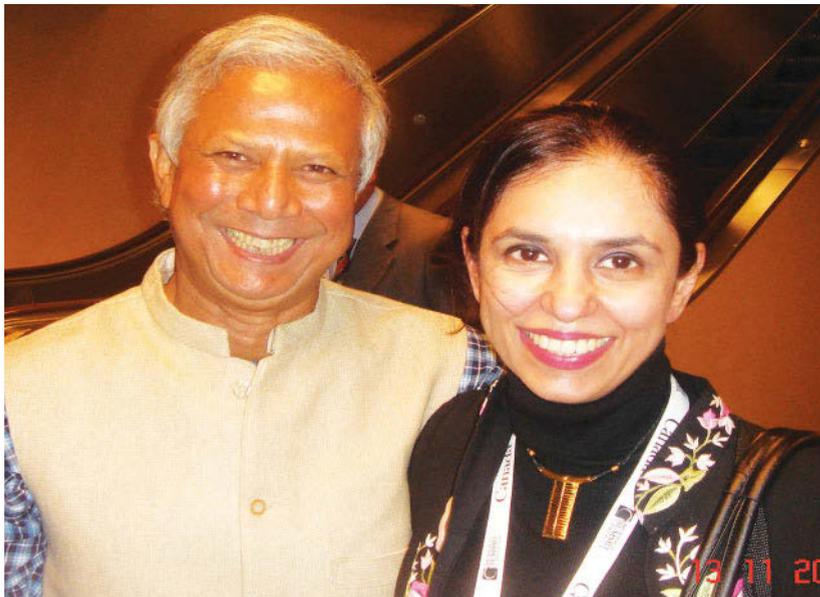
give them ownership in water and sanitation and other infrastructure projects, we cannot ensure implementation and success in these projects, as women are the ones who take care of water-fetching for rural families and those on the periphery of urban centers.”

It was a turning point in Zafar’s career when she heard a 70-year-old woman in Kalat, Balochistan, saying the villagers knew that clean drinking water is healthy for their families but they needed money to buy it. Zafar decided to help them get that money and build better lives. She met Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus, the microfinance pioneer and founder of Bangladesh’s Grameen Bank, and expressed her desire to start a microfinance scheme to help the Pakistani poor gain sustainable

economic stability. Her meeting with Yunus prompted her visit to Bangladesh, to learn from the Grameen Bank experience. Zafar studied the methods with Yunus for two years, and visited other successful projects in Nepal and India. In Pakistan she also benefited from the experiences of Abbottabad-based Sungi Development Foundation, founded by the late Omar Asghar Khan, and the Balochistan Rural Support Programme. She was inspired by the late Pakistani community development pioneer Akhter Hameed Khan and Shoaib Sultan Khan, a founder of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme.

“After having varied experiences, I set up Kashf Foundation and I hired 1,800 young staff from local communities because I believed that enabling the young to earn their livelihoods is important, as they dominate the unemployed population of Pakistan,” Zafar recalls. Her success received recognition early when, in 1997, she was awarded a fellowship from the U.S.-based Ashoka Foundation, which supports innovative social entrepreneurs.

Kashf operates primarily in Pakistan’s suburbs: 70 percent of its work is on the urban periphery and 30 percent in rural areas. Most microfinance credits go to small traders: a cobbler’s shop, a small-scale jewelry business, a tea stall or restaurant. Families get loans to fund



Zafar and her mentor, Nobel Peace Prize winner and Grameen Bank founder Muhammad Yunus, attend a microcredit conference.



Kashf Foundation members call for social justice and financial parity for women on International Women's Day, 2011.

a business of their choice and for which they have skills.

Zafar's clients have succeeded in a variety of ways. Zafar relates the story of 42-year-old Nasim Baji with pride. Nasim Baji runs a costume jewelry business with microfinancing provided by Kashf. She borrowed Rs. 1,000 (U.S. \$10) 12 years ago to start her own bead jewelry enterprise, after weaving beads as a daily wage worker for a jewelry firm. She later diversified and today owns two molding machines to manufacture metal jewelry. She employs 30 women workers. Her husband works for her now. Her jewelry is sold in several cities. Nasim Baji inspires other women to set up small businesses to generate income.

"Microfinance is not all about giving loans to individuals,

but it is meant to change mind-sets of communities to enhance their ability to earn their livelihood and live with dignity. With families [working] together, microfinance-led trading produced sustainable dividends," says Zafar. She explains that Kashf has expanded from working only with women to working with families. To increase access to capital, Zafar founded the Kashf Microfinance Bank. Zafar says that from the original 15 clients who were lent a total of \$1,500 in 1996, Kashf has provided loans of \$225 million to more than one million families. Kashf was among the first such institutions to offer insurance for clients, at a minimal premium, to assist in debt payment when the head of household dies.

Apart from Kashf, Zafar is a founding member of the Pakistan Microfinance Network and is a member of the U.N. Advisory Group on Inclusive Financial Services. In 2007, she was named a Skoll Foundation social entrepreneur, and has been the recipient of a number of prestigious international awards, including Pakistan's highest civilian honor, the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. Kashf Foundation was ranked 34 out of the top 50 microfinance institutions by *Forbes* magazine in 2007, and was honored in 2009 with the OneWoman Initiative Award by the U.S. State Department. More recently Roshaneh Zafar was a delegate to the U.S. Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship held in Washington in April 2010 and is the recipient of the Vital Voices 2010 Global Leadership Award for Economic Empowerment.

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**Shafqat Munir** is a journalist, researcher and communications specialist in Pakistan. He is the founder editor of Infochange News and Features Network (INFN), [www.infochangepakistan.net](http://www.infochangepakistan.net), a leading Pakistani development and investigative news agency.

# Honduran Women Fight Poverty One Coffee Bean at a Time

*By* Ritu Sharma

Honduran Dulce Marlen Contreras knew that poverty was the source of domestic violence and other problems afflicting women in her community, so she began an organization to educate women about their rights. It soon evolved into an agricultural cooperative that has given its members economic stability.

**I**n 1993, Dulce Marlen Contreras founded La Coordinadora de Mujeres Campesinas de La Paz, or COMUCAP, to raise awareness about women's rights in Honduras. A daughter of farmers in the rural region of La Paz, Honduras, Marlen was tired of watching the women of her community endure widespread alcoholism and domestic violence. Along with seven of her friends, Marlen began COMUCAP in order to educate local women about their rights, how to stand up for themselves and eventually become economically independent. Workshops and women's shelters were critical to the mission, but Marlen soon realized that to reduce domestic violence for the long term, COMUCAP must attack the root problem, poverty.

Understanding the relationship between poverty and social ills, COMUCAP changed its approach. In addition to the consciousness-raising workshops, the organization started training women to grow and sell organic coffee and aloe plants. Traditionally, the women of La Paz looked

after the children and relied on men for economic support. Growing coffee and aloe vera, selling the crops and developing products to sell not only enabled women to earn additional income for their families, but gave them economic independence and stability.

The initial reaction from the community was hostile. Women's empowerment was seen as a threat to families and traditional family values. But as COMUCAP's programs grew, Marlen and her friends started seeing results that altered family relationships: The more money the women made, the more power they were able to assert in the household. The community began to view the women of COMUCAP as economic contributors. More and more women now made decisions jointly with their husbands. The women could more effectively resist domestic abuse. Economic stability and equality within family structures dramatically decreased household violence and improved quality of life within COMUCAP families. All of these women's children attend school.



COMUCAP founder Dulce Marlen Contreras sits in the cooperative's coffee storeroom. Coffee and aloe vera are COMUCAP's main products.

Today COMUCAP provides employment and income to more than 225 women in rural Honduras through an expanding array of programs. Most programs focus on agricultural production: cultivation of oranges to make orange wine, aloe vera plants for a variety of products, organic coffee, organic fertilizers. COMUCAP programs offer technical advice in organic agriculture and support agricultural lending programs. Literacy political advocacy, grant proposal and fundraising workshops are available to COMUCAP-affiliated groups. There is now training and support for women to start their own businesses. Some women have purchased their own plots of land through loans from COMUCAP.

A cooperative agriculture program helps members form groups ranging in size from five to 25 women. They rent or own small pieces of land where they collectively grow coffee and aloe vera plants. The aloe vera plants are used to produce Wala Organic Aloe products such as shampoo, juices and desserts. In the COMUCAP business model, co-op members grow their own crops, refine and prepare them for use and manufacture products which are distributed in local, regional, national and international markets. The profits are then evenly divided among co-op members. A conscious decision was made to grow organic crops to make all organic



COMUCAP members sell their produce and other products at a local market. Their organic products are entering the international market.

products, which makes entry into international markets easier and causes less harm to the environment. COMUCAP's coffee is USDA organic and Fair Trade certified. As of November 2009, COMUCAP was exporting more than 10,000 pounds of

fair trade coffee to Europe each year and employing more than 100 women.

Juana Suazo, a 55-year-old mother of six, is a prime example of why COMUCAP works. After separating from her abusive husband, Juana was suddenly



COMUCAP worker Dolores with an armful of freshly cut aloe vera at a farm in Marcala, Honduras.

faced with raising her children alone. At first she struggled to make ends meet by working multiple jobs. Then COMUCAP provided the means for her to create a sustainable future for her family. With the organization's help, Juana started her

own wine-producing business, which eventually allowed her to buy a home and five acres of land where she now grows coffee and vegetables. Today, she pays for two daughters to attend college and supports two sons living in the United States.

Besides helping her escape domestic abuse and gain economic stability so her family can thrive, COMUCAP inspired Juana to give back to her community by studying law. She now dedicates her spare time to defending the rights of other women in need.

Greater economic opportunity and earning capacity allow women to escape violent situations, adequately care for their families and educate their children, thereby strengthening their communities. A woman's economic independence increases her stature within and outside her household. Community-based organizations such as COMUCAP empower women to overcome poverty and regain dignity and peace in their lives — one coffee bean at a time.

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**Ritu Sharma** is co-founder and president of Women Thrive Worldwide, a leading U.S. nonprofit organization that advocates for policies that provide economic assistance and capacity building for women living in poverty.





CHAPTER

# 2



## WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Few investments have as large a payoff as girls' education. Educated women are more likely to ensure health care for their families, educate their children and become income earners. The Zarghuna Girls School in Kabul, Afghanistan, depicted here, is supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

# WOMEN AND EDUCATION

*By* Lori S. Ashford

**T**he right to education for all has been an international goal for decades, but since the 1990s, women's education and empowerment have come into sharp focus. Several landmark conferences, including the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, placed these issues at the center of development efforts.

The Millennium Development Goals — agreed to by world leaders at the U.N. Millennium Summit in 2000 — call for universal primary education and for closing the gender gap in secondary and higher education. These high-level agreements spawned initiatives around the world to increase girls' school enrollments. Changes since 1990 have been remarkable, considering the barriers that had to be overcome in developing countries.

In many traditional societies, girls are prevented from attaining their full potential because of lower priority placed on educating daughters (who marry and leave the family) and the lower status of girls and women in general. Families may also have concerns about the school fees, girls being taught by male teachers and girls' safety away from home. Governments and communities have begun to break down these barriers, however,



because of overwhelming evidence of the benefits of educating girls.

## Why educating girls matters

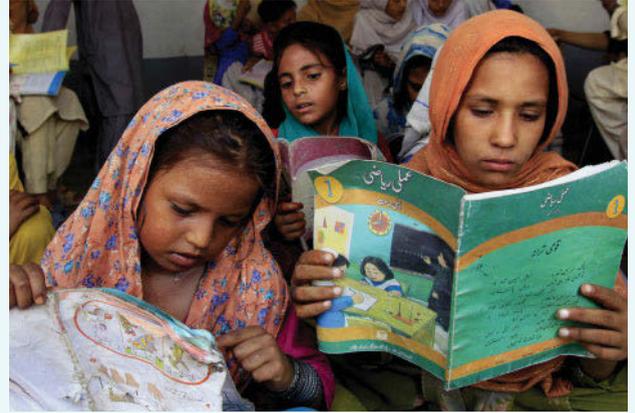
Few investments have as large a payoff as girls' education. Household surveys in developing countries have consistently shown that women with more education have smaller, healthier and better-educated families. The linkages are clear: Educated women are more likely to take care of their health, desire fewer children and educate them well, which, in turn, makes it more likely their children will survive and thrive into adulthood.

Research by the World Bank and other organizations has shown that

A woman in Bangladesh studies in an adult literacy class in a rural village. The teacher is from the village and trained at a college nearby.



Village women in Nepalganj, Nepal, are learning to read and to set up small businesses.



Pakistani girls in Peshawar attend a school that was reconvened after their former school was destroyed to deter their attendance.



Corporate support of girls' education is exemplified by Motorola's "Introduce a Girl to Engineering" event, part of the company's initiative to attract U.S. children to science and foster innovation early. Here Motorola engineer Deb Matteo conducts a light and color experiment with two young participants.

increasing girls' schooling boosts women's wages and leads to faster economic growth than educating only boys. Moreover, when women earn more money, they are more likely to invest it in their children and households, enhancing family wealth and well-being. Other benefits of women's education captured in studies include lower levels of HIV infection, domestic violence and harmful practices toward women, such as female genital cutting and bride burning.

### How girls and women have fared since Beijing

Advances in girls' education worldwide have been a success story in development. According to UNESCO, 96 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 2008, up from 84 girls per 100 boys in 1995. The ratio for secondary school is close behind, at 95 girls to 100



Left: A woman participates in a USAID-supported science education program in Tanzania that helps women expand their opportunities through science. Below: Despite two decades of violent conflict in Somalia, parents continue to educate their daughters. These girls study at the Al-Emamal-Nawawi school in Gardo, northeast Somalia.

boys in 2008. By 2005, nearly two-thirds of countries had closed the gap between girls' and boys' school enrollments. Girls still lag behind boys in university-level education worldwide, but the gap is closing over time.



Girls lag farthest behind in the poorest countries, such as Afghanistan, Chad, Central African Republic and Mali, where overall school enrollments are low. In Somalia, only half as many girls are enrolled in school as boys: 23 percent of girls compared to 42 percent of boys in 2008, according to UNESCO. Girls' schooling and literacy lag well behind boys in much of sub-Saharan Africa and Western and Southern Asia, where much work remains to be done.

At the other end of the spectrum, in countries with high levels of school enrollment, girls often fare better than boys. In much of Latin America, Europe, East Asia and in the United States, girls' enrollments in secondary and higher education have surpassed those of their male peers, demonstrating what girls and women can achieve once the barriers to education have been overcome.

Still, women account for two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults, because older women are less likely to have attended school than their younger counterparts. They are also much more likely to be illiterate if they are poor and live in rural areas. Literacy programs and continuing education exist, but the efforts are not systematically reported across countries. In addition, girls and women are disadvantaged when it comes to technical and vocational education, in fields such as science and technology that have long been dominated by men.

### **What can we learn from successful efforts?**

Many gains in women's education can be attributed to special interventions such as the elimination of school fees, scholarships, community schools for girls and

the training of women teachers. Such targeted efforts have translated into higher girls' school enrollments in countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Yemen, Morocco, Uganda and Brazil. Political commitment is essential for raising the profile of the issue and increasing girls' access to schooling. Mexico pioneered a major social program — now replicated in impoverished communities in the United States and other countries — that pays families to keep their children, particularly girls, in school.

Because the gender gap is wider at higher levels of education, it will not be enough for girls to merely sign up for school; they need to stay in school. Governments, educators and communities must address issues such as gender stereotypes that reinforce women's lower status, poor school quality, and early marriage and childbearing, which often cut short women's education. Also, the mismatch between education and the skills needed for today's workforce must be corrected. These steps may ensure that girls reap the greatest benefits from education. Countries that are committed to gender equality will not only see better report cards in education, they'll be healthier and wealthier as well.

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**Lori S. Ashford**, a freelance consultant, has written about global population, health and women's issues for 20 years. Formerly with the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), she authored the widely disseminated PRB "Women of Our World" data sheets and "New Population Policies: Advancing Women's Health and Rights" for the *Population Bulletin*, among other publications.

PROFILE

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# Rita Conceição

Bahia Street

*By* Margaret Willson



After growing up poor in Brazil, Rita Conceição saw education as the path out of poverty. Her determination got her to university, and her desire to help other women led her to found Bahia Street.

**B**orn in one of the vast shantytowns of Salvador, Brazil, Rita Conceição knew at an early age the realities of violence, poverty and death. She also knew she wanted something different.

“My mother had lots of children and a hard life. She died young, so I brought up my brothers and sisters. I knew I didn’t want that life.”

With great determination, Rita traveled more than an hour each way by public bus to a school where she could learn to read and write. She loved the arts and took up photography. While still a teenager, Rita took courageous photos of protests against the then-ruling Brazilian military dictatorship.

“I didn’t think of a black or gender consciousness,” she says. “People never talked about racism then.” But all around her she saw women like herself working as maids for slave wages, the only job (except prostitution) open to them.

Rita decided she wanted to go to university, an almost impossible dream for someone from the shantytowns. While working a full-time job, she tried the difficult university entrance exam three times and failed. Refusing to give up, she took it a fourth time and passed, gaining entrance into the Federal University of Bahia, the best in her state.

When I first met Rita in 1991, she had earned her university

degree in sociology. Once she had a chance to leave the shantytown where she was born, Rita, unlike any other person I ever met there, decided instead to stay and fight the inequality she knew so well. So in 1996, when she invited me to join her in working for equality for the people of her communities, I committed to help in any way I could. From this partnership the nonprofit Bahia Street was born.

Listening to what the people in her community told her answered their dire need for expression and opened a strong avenue for change. Rita initiated a quality education program for girls that would allow them to enter university and change their futures. Rita drew on her own struggles, using the strengths that propelled her from a shantytown to university. She incorporated race and gender consciousness into the Bahia Street classes. Seeing that the girls could not study because they were half starving, she began a lunch program, cooking and buying the food herself until she could find someone to help her. She knew that most girls from these shantytowns get pregnant by age 14, so she began teaching the girls about reproduction, sexual violence and self-esteem.

“As I was growing up,” she says, “the girls in my family were never valued as much as the boys. This still exists in our society, but I say to the girls that

their roots are their reality. I pass on to them the importance of ethics, self-respect and the solidarity of women. They see in me the difference it makes — what choices you make in your life — and also the strength it takes. If women are to become equal, these qualities and knowledge are vital.”

After years of renting or borrowing tiny rooms for its classes, Bahia Street was finally able to buy a building. The only problem was that the building was falling down. Rita saw this as no problem at all. She employed local men and oversaw its complete reconstruction. To save money, the men mixed the cement in

wheelbarrows and poured it by hand. Rita roamed the city, looking for sales; she negotiated with merchants to donate materials that she then brought back on public bus, since she had no car. Slowly, the building took shape. When the first floor was mostly finished, Rita, her staff and the girls moved in.



Conceição poses with some of the students at Bahia Street.



Bahia Street lessons supplement public school education, helping girls to excel in school and become leaders and role models.

The five-story Bahia Street Center is now complete, with classrooms, kitchen, library, computer lab and much more. In addition to education and support programs for the girls, Bahia Street now offers classes for the girls' caregivers and other community members. It has become a haven for the girls and a community gathering place.

"We teach the girls to take care of others in their lives as well. Women take care of the children, and in that is the future of our society. The work we do is a form of black resistance. We are working for the survival of the black people in Bahia, showing that as black women, we can have equality and shape

the future. In Bahia Street, we are giving girls the chance my mother never had."

When people talk with her about her remarkable achievements, Rita is humble and realistic. "In Bahia Street," she says, "I really found my identity. Managing to create Bahia Street continues to be an amazing process, and I have learned a consciousness myself through this process."

Recently, Bahia Street graduate Daza completed university with a journalism degree. In Daza, shantytown residents have a voice they never had before. And the long-term Bahia Street vision of fostering equality for shantytown women is becoming a reality.

Rita laughs with a smile that, in its brightness, knows suffering, love and strength. "And the work continues. That is the way for all of us. If we are to make a better world, the work is what we do."

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**Margaret Willson** is co-founder and international director of Bahia Street. She is affiliate assistant professor in anthropology at the University of Washington. Her most recent book is *Dance Lest We All Fall Down: Breaking Cycles of Poverty in Brazil and Beyond* (University of Washington Press, 2010).

# Educating Women About Technology

*By* Renee Ho

Mobile technology is improving the lives of illiterate women and girls in rural Senegal, and educating them in the process, thanks to an organization that teaches them to use mobile phones.

Astou watches as the photographer raises his camera to capture the crowded village classroom. She adjusts her nursing infant and turns her own camera on him — only hers is a mobile phone. For the past few weeks, Astou has been participating in a community-led mobile technology course taught in her local language of Wolof. She and hundreds of other women and girls throughout rural Senegal have learned how to make and receive calls, compose and send SMS messages and use phone functions such as calculators, alarms and, yes, sometimes even cameras.

Astou is a bright 24-year-old mother of four children. She had seen her husband use a mobile phone, but prior to this class she had never touched one herself. “Before, he would not let me use the phone because he feared I would waste the credit,” she laughs, “but now he asks me to teach him and we are saving to buy another for me.”

Two years ago, Astou was not only unfamiliar with how to use a mobile phone, but she

was illiterate. Composing or reading an SMS text message would have been impossible for her. Like most of the women and girls in her village in the region of Vélingara, Senegal, Astou never attended school. Household responsibilities and the cost of schooling prevented her from receiving a formal education. She married at 16 years of age — the average age for girls in rural Senegal.

In a country with a 41.9 percent literacy rate, Astou is breaking norms and the cyclical trap of poverty. In 2008, Tostan, an international nongovernmental development organization, started the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) — a 30-month human rights-based, nonformal education program — in her village. More than 80 percent of CEP participants are women and girls. They begin the program with sessions on human rights, democracy, health and hygiene and problem-solving. Later, they continue with lessons on literacy, numeracy and project management.

Once participants have achieved basic literacy, however,



The Tostan Jokko community empowerment program teaches women to use mobile phones.

they often lack a practical means of maintaining it. As a solution, Tostan partnered with UNICEF to launch the Jokko Initiative in 2009 (jokko means “communication” in Wolof). The initiative incorporates mobile technology into CEP as way to reinforce reading and writing skills. The Jokko module teaches participants how to use basic mobile phone functions and SMS texting. It uses interactive visuals and skits that focus on relevant applications and the relative affordability of texting. “I text messages better [than my husband] and that saves us money on expensive calls,” explains Astou.

Outside of the classroom, students circle around a strange arrangement of sticks. With a little explanation, the sticks come to represent a mango tree. Khady, age 52, walks along the “tree branches” and stops at each fork where signs are placed: Contacts, Search, Add Contact. This activity teaches participants how to navigate the phone’s main menu. It is just one example of what makes Tostan’s educational model work: adapting lessons to cultural contexts and using appropriate local references.

“Before, if I wanted to send a text message, I had to ask for help,” Khady says, “but now I am much more independent. Now people come to me and I’m happy to teach them.” When mobile phone technology reaches women and girls, it amplifies their



A village woman practices on a mobile phone and makes notes.

voices and influence in community decisionmaking. They become agents of their own change. Khady continues to explain how the CEP provided her with basic math and management skills. With several boys and girls huddled around, she demonstrates how the phone’s calculator helps her manage her peanut-selling business.

Mobile phone technology has connected women and girls to market information and opportunities, family in the diaspora and, perhaps most fundamentally, to each other. The phones have been critical for community organization and social mobilization. Tostan’s Jokko Initiative has developed a unique social networking platform that allows participants to send an

SMS message to a central server, where it is then sent out to an entire community of other users. One participant explains, “It’s when you send multiple messages at once — a cheaper method of communication.” The platform is used for community advocacy campaigns. Women send, for example, reminders of vaccination and school enrollment dates.

The Jokko Initiative has reached 350 villages and continues to grow. Tostan has directly trained about 23,585 people, but the high demand for knowledge and the eagerness of participants to share information suggests that thousands more have benefited.

In the project’s next phase, Tostan will partner with the



Women, some of them illiterate, learn to navigate the main menu of a mobile phone through an arrangement of branches on the ground.

Rural Energy Foundation (<http://ruralenergy.nl/>), a nonprofit organization that helps rural communities gain access to renewable energy. Currently, about 80 percent of rural Senegal lacks

electricity, so charging phones often involves risky and inconvenient trips into the nearest small town. To alleviate this, Tostan will pilot community-led, solar-powered charging stations.

These telecenters will provide electricity for mobile phones, and the income generated by these microenterprises will be reinvested in other community-led development projects.

Mobile phone use in Africa is growing twice as fast as in any other region in the world. In Senegal, the number of SIM card purchases nearly doubled from 2007 to 2009, up to 6.9 million. But as Tostan has found, absolute numbers alone do not empower communities. Success in low-income countries requires bridging the gender gap. Putting knowledge and technology in the hands of women — literally— is critical to achieving lasting development.

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**Renee Ho** is a volunteer at Tostan International in Dakar, Senegal. Her interests include women and the technology divide in lower-income countries. More information is online at <http://www.tostan.org>.





CHAPTER

# 3



## WOMEN AND HEALTH

Healthy women are an asset to their families and society. They remain fit to care for their families, earn income and contribute to their communities. A woman and child in Botswana.

# WOMEN AND HEALTH

*By* Lori S. Ashford

**W**omen's health can be a barometer of a nation's progress. Countries afflicted by poverty, corruption, war or weak governance often neglect their most vulnerable citizens. Frequently these are women. When women are unhealthy, their productivity is lowered and their children and families are less secure. This has an economic impact. So investing in women's health makes sense from both an economic and a human rights perspective.

## Unequal in Health

Women live longer than men, statistics show, but they may spend a greater proportion of their lives in poor health for a variety of reasons, attributable less to biological differences than to poverty and gender discrimination. Poor families may invest less in their daughters, giving them less nutrition, health care and education than their sons. Such disadvantages early in life have long-term consequences for girls' health and well-being. For example, adolescent childbearing, common in countries and communities that condone child marriage, poses health risks and limits life prospects for the teen mothers and their children. If women are undernourished they risk having low birth-weight babies



who, in turn, face a higher risk of early death and poor health. An added threat to the health of women and girls exists in countries where there is a cultural preference for sons, such as China and India. Sex-selective abortions and female infanticide are responsible for millions of "missing girls." The resulting shortage of women relative to men can have alarming social repercussions. An April 2011 report in *The Economist* cited evidence that a skewed sex ratio in India has led to increased trafficking of girls, among other abuses. Data from U.N. Population Fund studies also support this (UNFPA, 2004).

Pregnancy and childbirth take a heavy toll on women's health in the developing

The Healthy Family project trains volunteers to spread important health messages and trains health workers. The program helps keep Sameera Fazilova and her daughter Mamura of Termez, Uzbekistan, healthy.



world. According to 2010 estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO), 358,000 women die of preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth every year; 99 percent of these deaths are in developing countries. In contrast, in developed countries where women deliver their babies in hospitals and have access to care for pregnancy complications, maternal deaths are extremely rare.

The vast majority of the world's maternal deaths occur in the two poorest regions: sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, where high fertility multiplies the dangers that mothers face over a lifetime, one in 31 women is likely to die as a consequence of pregnancy or childbirth (WHO, 2010). In developed countries, that chance is one in 4,300. Outside of Africa, Afghanistan is the riskiest place on earth to become pregnant and bear children, with a one

in 11 lifetime chance of dying from pregnancy-related causes.

Millions of women suffer physical injuries or long-term disabilities, such as incontinence or ruptured organs, resulting from lack of proper care during pregnancy and childbirth. Many of these disabilities go unreported because women in developing countries consider them normal. The technology and knowledge to prevent needless deaths and injuries has long been available, but geography, substandard health systems, gender bias and political inertia all create barriers to making motherhood safer.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic also threatens women's health in poor countries and communities. Where the virus is spread through heterosexual contact, women are more vulnerable to infection than men for physiological and social reasons, such as women's economic dependence

**Two Afghan doctors examine a patient's x-ray at Rabia Balkhi Women's Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan.**



Women in Quezon City, Philippines, demonstrate in support of legislation that would provide women universal access to reproductive health and maternal care programs.

on men, their lack of power to ask male partners to practice safer sex and — too often — coerced sex. According to a 2009 UNAIDS report, “An estimated 50 million women in Asia are at risk of becoming infected with HIV from their intimate partners ... men who engage in high-risk sexual behaviours.”

### Recent Trends Encouraging

The good news is that today women are marrying later throughout the developing world. They are delaying first births and having fewer children than their mothers did. These trends reflect the fact that more girls are staying in school and more women and couples are practicing family planning. But there still is a large unmet need for family planning: According to a 2009 report from the Guttmacher Institute, more than 200 million women worldwide who want to avoid pregnancy do not use modern contraception. This contributes to tens of millions of unplanned births and unsafe abortions

annually, often among the poorest women, who are least able to obtain and use the health services they need.

Estimates from WHO in 2010 revealed that maternal deaths dropped by about one-third globally from 1990 to 2008, thanks to a number of factors such as increased availability of contraception, prenatal care and skilled assistance during childbirth. Countries as diverse as Bolivia, China, Eritrea, Iran, Romania and Vietnam have made remarkable progress. Much more work remains to be done, however, for all countries to meet the Millennium Development Goal to reduce maternal deaths by three-fourths (compared with 1990 levels) by 2015.

### More to be Done

Where countries have prioritized women’s health in national policy, great progress has been made. Women should be encouraged to recognize and speak out about their health care needs, so policymakers may learn and take action.



Partnerships between local groups and international organizations provide health care and counseling for pregnant women and new mothers in Madagascar.

Concern about women's issues, including health care, prompted President Obama to appoint Melanne Verveer the first ambassador-at-large for women's issues, to help address such problems. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has made global women's issues a high priority of the U.S. State Department. In 2009 President Obama designated \$63 million — to be spent over six years — for the Global Health Initiative, a partnership among U.S. agencies to boost health care in the developing world, particularly for women and children. HIV/AIDS treatment projects such as mothers2mothers, which is highlighted in this chapter, are funded by the U. S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

Improving women's health starts by recognizing that women have different needs from men and unequal access to health care. Focusing a "gender lens" on health services is necessary to reveal and address the inequalities between men's and women's care. This means paying

more attention to girls, adolescents and marginalized women who suffer from poverty and powerlessness and changing the attitudes and practices that harm women's health. Also, men should be partners in promoting women's health, in ensuring that sex and childbearing are safe and healthy and in rearing the next generation of young leaders — both girls and boys.

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**Lori S. Ashford**, a freelance consultant, has written about global population, health and women's issues for 20 years. Formerly with the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), she authored the widely disseminated PRB "Women of Our World" data sheets and "New Population Policies: Advancing Women's Health and Rights" for the *Population Bulletin*, among other publications.

PROFILE

# Salwa Al-Najjab

Palestinian Health Care Activist

*By* Naela Khalil

Overcoming gender bias in male-dominated hospitals wasn't easy for Salwa Al-Najjab, but her success has inspired other Arab women. Her Juzoor Foundation brings medicine to poor and underserved communities.



Salwa Al-Najjab was the best female math student in her class, and her passion for mathematics would have led her to study at the College of Engineering, but for her Russian math teacher's advice to study medicine: "With your intelligence and your strong personality, you will be of more benefit to the women of Palestine as a doctor than as an engineer," the teacher said. Salwa Al-Najjab followed her teacher's advice, and today she is changing medical care in the Palestinian Territories.

The hospital environment stirred Al-Najjab's curiosity and her love of knowledge. She hadn't realized that her medical career also would show her that many women lived in very different circumstances from her own. Al-Najjab admits: "The hospital and the medical profession opened my eyes wide to conditions which I hadn't realized were as bad and as difficult as they were." Her lifelong professional and personal battle to support women's rights and to help provide better health care for women started when she began practicing medicine in 1979 at Al-Maqasid Hospital in Jerusalem.

She expanded her efforts to create better conditions for women in the mid-1980s. Carrying her physician's bag and instrument case, Al-Najjab visited Palestinian villages and refugee camps to give women medical

check-ups and treatment. She volunteered her time under the most difficult and complex conditions. She was creating change on the ground.

Today, after more than 30 years of work in hospitals and clinics in different parts of the Palestinian Territories, Al-Najjab heads the *Juzoor* (Roots) Foundation for Health and Social Development, based in Jerusalem. She continues to enthusiastically pursue her dream, although now, she says, it is more difficult "to influence health care policy decisionmakers to improve and develop the level of health care services provided to women, and to bridge the gap between service providers and recipients."

Al-Najjab's optimism is infectious. She maintains her smile despite the challenges she has faced in her life. During her early school years, she attended eight different schools in Ramallah, Hebron and Jordan. Her father worked first at the Jordanian Ministry of Education, then at UNESCO, so her family moved frequently. This meant she and her three siblings often changed schools, making it difficult to maintain long-term friendships. However, it was always easy for her to maintain her academic excellence.

Al-Najjab traveled to Russia to attend Moscow University in 1971. After one year of Russian language study, she enrolled at Kuban Medical School



Palestinian women wait for treatment for their babies at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency clinic in Gaza City.

in Krasdnada. Dealing with her fellow students was more difficult than learning a new language or other demanding subjects. Some Arab students looked at her disapprovingly; others underestimated her ability to succeed because she was a woman. She persevered in her studies, defying those who doubted her, and became a model of academic success. She became a mentor to Palestinian women studying abroad.

Her first job at Al-Maqasid Hospital presented her with major challenges. She was the only female resident doctor, and she began working in the obstetrics and gynecology section. It was difficult for the male doctors to accept a female colleague and professional competitor. The hardest thing for Al-Najjab was that the female nurses did not accept her either, because they were accustomed to dealing with male doctors. They believed that a male doctor was more competent and professional than his female counterpart. The atmosphere at the hospital reflected this masculine bias in the way they divided the work: Al-Najjab would do routine examinations of female patients at the hospital clinic, while the male doctors would perform surgical operations and circumcisions. They did not expect that this quiet, beautiful young woman would resist this arrangement, nor that the section head would support her.



A nurse in a West Bank community clinic examines patients. The clinic is part of USAID's Health Flagship Project to improve community health care.

Al-Najjab says: "I refused to accept their masculine [-biased] division of labor, and I stuck to my position: 'I will participate in surgical operations, and I will perform circumcisions on boys.' This didn't please them, and they nicknamed me 'the rooster.'"

Al-Najjab says that the first time she experienced discrimination against women was at the hospital: "I grew up in a family that offered the same opportunities to both sexes. Even my grandfather, back in the 1960s, allowed my aunts to study in Britain, to work outside of the house and to spend the night away from home. Therefore, the attitude that I faced from my

colleagues at the hospital astonished me."

Al-Najjab also learned about the unequal status of women. She says, "I felt that I was getting to know my society for the first time. I would feel distraught when I delivered the baby of a girl who was no older than 15, or when I heard women affirming to me, unprompted, that men had a monopoly over decisions regarding who their daughters would marry, whether or not to use contraceptives or how many children they would have." Al-Najjab adds, "Women don't have the right to defend their own right to an education ... It's a cycle that must be broken."

Al-Najjab's family valued knowledge. Her father defied convention by sending her to study in Russia. Although her mother hadn't completed her studies, she encouraged her four children, girls and boys alike, to continue their education. All of them graduated from college.

"Unlike other mothers, mine never talked to me about marriage. Instead, she would always talk to me about the importance of education for a woman's life," Al-Najjab recalls.

After seven years at Al-Maqasid Hospital, during which time she helped establish several high-quality clinics in Jerusalem and its suburbs, Al-Najjab left the hospital to work in the field. "I discovered that only a small number of people go to hospitals, either due to poverty or ignorance," she says. "If I wanted to provide health care to women, I had to go to them, wherever they were."

In 1985, Al-Najjab and a group of health professionals began visiting villages and refugee camps to provide health care. People's reactions were positive, but some doctors criticized her for damaging doctors' "prestige" by going to the patients rather than insisting that people come to the doctor.

By breaking this rule of prestige, Al-Najjab and her colleagues found conditions that they did not encounter in well-organized clinics equipped with winter heating and summer

fans. They met people in far-flung places who suffered from a severe lack of health care compounded by the complex political conditions resulting from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Al-Najjab says, "I treated women who had no bathrooms in their homes and others living in homes unfit for human habitation. I came into contact with a bitter reality that overturned all of my convictions regarding the concept of health: I realized that it wasn't only a question of physical well-being, but that health is also related to economic, social and psychological conditions, and to the environment."

She has fought many battles and continues to do so. Her convictions and her decisions are sometimes contrary to social traditions that limit women's rights. Al-Najjab is an activist who gets things done. She co-founded the Women's Social and Legal Guidance Center in Ramallah. The center shelters women who are victims of violence, offers them legal assistance, refers their cases to the police and refers them to a safe house for their protection.

"I used to believe that as the years went by, change for the better would take place. But what I am noticing today is the opposite. In this social environment of political frustration and poverty, fundamentalist movements have strengthened and are actively working to move society backwards at every level.

Women and women's rights are the most prominent victims," she says.

Besides leading the Juzoor Foundation, which seeks to influence health care policies, Al-Najjab heads the Middle East and North Africa Health Policy Forum, where she continues to strive for change. She was nominated by the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem for the U.S. Department of State's 2010 International Women of Courage award.

With a husband and three children, in addition to her medical practice and activism, Dr. Salwa Al-Najjab has a full life. Her prescription for success is this: "We cannot but be optimistic about life."

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**Naela Khalil** is a Palestinian journalist. She won the 2008 Samir Kassir Award for freedom of the press.

# Mothers2mothers:

## Help for HIV-Positive Women

*By* Maya Kulycky

HIV/AIDS is the scourge of Africa, but in Kenya, the nongovernmental organization mothers2mothers enables HIV-positive women and their families to live full lives despite the disease.

**T**eresa Njeri, a single mother in Kiambu, a northern suburb of Kenya's capital, Nairobi, has a dream. She wants to build a home for herself and her six-year-old son. Recently, Teresa bought a plot of land. When she looks out over it she pictures the house she plans to build, with three bedrooms, a "big kitchen" and a yard where her son can play. Teresa is confident and optimistic. But planning for a bright future, and having the means to make it a reality, is a big change for her. Ten years ago Teresa was convinced that she and her son were going to die.

In 2001, Teresa was diagnosed as HIV-positive when she was five months pregnant. "The first thing that came to my mind was death," says Teresa. "All of my hopes were shattered." The nurse at the clinic told Teresa she could protect her baby from HIV, but the nurse "wasn't convincing, she was not very sure." Regardless, Teresa joined a prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) program. Meanwhile,

she disclosed her status to her husband, who also tested HIV-positive. Like others who were afraid of the stigma associated with HIV, the couple hid their status. They separated shortly after the birth of their son, who is HIV-negative.

A few months later, Teresa was hospitalized and told she had AIDS. When her father discovered her status from the hospital staff, he told her family, who isolated her and took her son away to live in the family's village. "So I was left alone, all alone in the world," Teresa remembers.

Teresa fled, sought treatment and volunteered to speak to others with AIDS. But she says she still "didn't have any focus in life. I didn't have any hope. I didn't know what to do." Then Teresa found mothers2mothers, thanks to nurses in the hospital where she volunteered. They told her that mothers2mothers was seeking to hire women trained in PMTCT. Teresa applied and became a mothers2mothers mentor mother.



Mathakane Metsing carries her daughter at their home in Khatleng, Lesotho. She was helped by — and now works for — mothers2mothers as a peer educator.



Ntsiuoa Ralefifi, center, at a mothers2mothers support group at Mafeteng hospital in Lesotho. When she learned she was HIV positive, she enrolled in the transmission prevention program.

### International Partnerships

Mothers2mothers — funded by USAID, PEPFAR (U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) and the CDC (U.S. Centers for Disease Control), the Elton John AIDS Foundation, Johnson & Johnson and other corporate and foundation

partners — trains and employs HIV-positive mothers to be “mentor mothers” to provide counseling, education and support to newly diagnosed HIV-positive pregnant women and new mothers. It is an innovative, sustainable model of care at the forefront of prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission.

Mothers2-mothers operates 680 sites in nine sub-Saharan African countries, reaching about 85,000 new pregnant women and new mothers a month.

The African continent is struggling under the burden of HIV/AIDS. Of the 33 million people carrying HIV worldwide, 22 million live in sub-Saharan

Africa. Ninety percent of HIV-infected babies are born in the region and 75 percent of the world's HIV-positive pregnant women live in 12 African countries, according to studies done by AVERT ([www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)), the UNAIDS Regional Support Team for Eastern and Southern Africa (<http://www.unaids-srstesa.org/unaids-priority/2-preventing-mothers-dying-and-babies-becoming-infected-h>) and the *World Health Organization Universal Access Report 2010*. Meanwhile, the region is desperately short of doctors and nurses.

Mothers2mothers fills a gap by enlisting HIV-positive mothers to counsel pregnant women about how testing and treatment can ensure their babies are born healthy and that, if necessary, they can get medication. Mentor mothers work beside doctors and nurses in health care facilities, helping patients understand, accept and adhere to the interventions that are prescribed. They are paid members of the medical team.

### **Empowering Women, Protecting Children**

The results are clear. In Lesotho, data collected by mothers2mothers show that 92 percent of pregnant women who attended the organization's instruction sessions three or more times took antiretroviral (ARV) medication during pregnancy, compared to

71 percent of those who attended once. Adhering to the ARV regime is critical to decreasing mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Furthermore, 97 percent of frequently-attending mothers2mothers clients get CD4 tests, which determine the number of T-helper cells with which the body combats infections. A CD4 test shows how advanced an HIV infection is and is a first step toward receiving the life-saving highly active antiretroviral treatment (HAART).

Women are empowered by the support they receive in mothers2mothers programs. They become peer educators who are role models in their communities, while earning a salary and gaining valuable work experience.

Teresa credits mothers2mothers with giving her a sense of purpose. Her mothers2mothers colleagues encouraged her to pursue her college degree. She is studying community health and development. "I feel like God created me ... to talk to these women, and help them, empower them, encourage them," she says.

Teresa points to her success in helping a pregnant woman from the traditional African religion of Wakorino, whose adherents often eschew professional medical care. "I saw her when I was coming to work," she says. She gave the woman her telephone number, and "the following day she called me and said, 'I

am here at the [hospital] gate.'" The woman tested HIV-positive. "I told her, 'Don't worry, because you are going to live a very long time.' I disclosed my status to her." Teresa convinced her to adhere to PMTCT treatment and deliver in the hospital. The woman gave birth to an HIV-negative child. "I feel like a star," Teresa laughs.

Mothers2mothers is working to expand its reach to women in more countries and in countries where it currently operates. The impact is clear and the method is simple — a woman talking to another woman can help prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

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**Maya Kulycky** is the global communications manager at mothers2mothers. She also lectures in political journalism at University of Cape Town, South Africa. She previously reported for ABC News and CNBC. A graduate of Johns Hopkins University, she received a master's degree from the University of London, Goldsmith's College, and a law degree from Yale Law School.





CHAPTER

# 4



## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Violence against women is a serious and common problem worldwide. Women and children, trafficked for sex and slave labor, are particularly vulnerable in conflict zones. This woman was among hundreds raped when rebels attacked a village in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

*By* Robin N. Haarr

**V**iolence against women is a serious human rights violation and a public health problem of global proportions. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

## A Serious and Common Problem

International research, conducted over the past two decades by the World Health Organization and others, reveals that violence against women is a much more serious and common problem than previously suspected. It is estimated that one out of three women worldwide has been raped, beaten or abused. While violence against women occurs in all cultures and societies, its frequency varies across countries. Societies that stress the importance of traditional patriarchal practices which reinforce unequal power relations between men and women and keep women in a subordinate position tend to have higher rates of violence against



women. Rates tend to be higher in societies in which women are socially regulated or secluded in the home, excluded from participation in the economic labor market and restricted from owning and inheriting property. It is more prevalent where there are restrictive divorce laws, a lack of victim support services and no legislation that effectively protects female victims and punishes offenders. Violence against women is a consequence of gender inequality, and it prevents women from fully advancing in society.

An activist in Dhaka, Bangladesh, participates in a candlelight vigil for the elimination of violence against women.



Two of the most common and universal forms of violence against women are intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Intimate partner violence by a current or former male partner or spouse is a serious, but preventable form of violence that affects millions of women worldwide. The violence can be emotional, economic, psychological or physical, including sexual abuse and murder. In countries where reliable, large-scale studies have been conducted, between 10 percent and 71 percent of women report they have been physically or sexually abused, or both, by an intimate partner (WHO). Intimate partner violence is so deeply embedded in many cultures and societies that millions

of women consider it an inevitable part of life and marriage. Many battered women suffer in silence because they fear retribution and negative repercussions and stigmatization for speaking out.

Sexual violence includes harassment, assault and rape. It is a common misperception that women are at greater risk of sexual violence from strangers; in reality, women are most likely to experience sexual violence from men they are intimate with or know. During times of war and armed conflict, rape and sexual violence perpetrated upon women are systematically used as a tactic of war by militaries and enemy groups to further their political objectives.

Women holding portraits of victims protest violence against women in Milan, Italy.

## Cultural Factors and Domestic Violence

In many parts of the world, violence against women and girls is based upon cultural and historical practices. In some parts of the world, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, female genital mutilation is a common form of violence against women. There are also forms of violence against women and girls related to marriage — child marriage, forced arranged marriages, bride kidnappings, and dowry-related deaths and violence. Child marriage and forced marriages are common in Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East. South Asia reportedly has some of the highest rates of child marriages in the world. In South Asia, young women are murdered or driven to suicide as a result of continuous harassment and torture by husbands and in-laws trying to extort more dowry from the bride and her family. In other parts of the world, such as Central Asia, the Caucasus region and parts of Africa, women are at risk of bride kidnappings or marriage by capture, in which a man abducts the woman he wishes to marry. Honor killings — the killing of females by male relatives to restore family honor — are deeply rooted in some cultures where women are considered the property of male relatives and are responsible for upholding family honor. This is the case particularly in the Middle East, South Asia and Africa. Honor killings have even occurred in immigrant communities in Europe and North America. A woman can be killed for talking to a male who is not a relative, consensual sexual relations outside of marriage, being raped, refusing to marry the man of her family's choice, disrespecting her husband or seeking a divorce.



Finally, trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, marriage, domestic servitude and labor is another form of violence against women. Women are deceived and coerced by traffickers who promise jobs and the opportunity for a better life. Parents sell their daughters for small sums of money or promises of remittances for the child's labor. Traffickers often target poor and vulnerable communities, but young women seeking to study or work abroad can also be at risk.

Young girls married off as children, a custom in some parts of Africa and Asia, are vulnerable to abuse. These girls, both 12 years old, were married in 2011 in Madhya Pradesh, India, although Indian law prohibits child marriage.



In Tucson, Arizona, a woman recounts her experiences of domestic abuse. Social programs and shelters aid U.S. women escaping domestic violence, which is often a factor in homelessness.

Trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery that affects millions of women and girls worldwide.

### Concerted Efforts Needed

Every year millions of women require medical attention as a result of violence. Victims suffer disfigurement, disability and death. Physical and mental health problems often continue long after the violence ends. Some women commit suicide to escape the violence in their lives. Across the globe, women are addressing violence in different ways, including awareness-raising campaigns, crisis centers and shelters for female victims, victim support services (medical care, counseling and legal services) and demanding enhanced criminal justice responses and laws that effectively protect female victims of violence and punish offenders. Violence against women is preventable,

but it requires the political will of governments, collaboration with international and civil society organizations and legal and civil action in all sectors of society.

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**Robin Haarr** is a professor of criminal justice at Eastern Kentucky University whose research focuses on violence against women and children and human trafficking, nationally and internationally. She does research and policy work for the United Nations and U.S. embassies, and has received several awards for her work, including induction into the Wall of Fame at Michigan State University's School of Criminal Justice and the CoraMae Richey Mann "Inconvenient Woman of the Year" Award from the American Society of Criminology, Division on Women and Crime.

PROFILE

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# Chouchou Namegabe

A Fierce Voice Against Sexual Violence

*By* Solange Lusiku



Journalist, radio broadcast producer and co-founder of the South Kivu Women's Media Association, which she currently heads, activist Chouchou Namegabe is fiercely dedicated to fighting violence against women. She focuses on eradicating sexual violence used as a weapon of war, a practice that has afflicted the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for more than a decade.

**B**orn on March 30, 1978, Namegabe took up the fight for women's rights early. Her secondary school education and experience in community radio spurred her interest in the struggle that now defines her. Namegabe began her broadcasting career in 1997 as a trainee at Radio Maendeleo, a popular local radio station. She continued to volunteer, and eventually became a permanent staff member. As violence intensified in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), she focused her reporting on women, health and human rights, and on exposing government corruption. AFEM (*Association des Femmes des Médias de Sud Kivu*) was founded in 2003, and she became its president in 2005. She has used the association and her role as a broadcaster as effective vehicles to disseminate the voices of women — especially rural

women — who are victims of the conflict.

### **“Listening Clubs” Break the Silence**

Namegabe works with other women throughout the DRC to set up “listening clubs” where abused women may share their stories. Convincing women who have been raped and tortured to break their silence and speak about their horrific experiences has been a major achievement for Namegabe and AFEM. Residents of Bukavu and all eight territories of South Kivu Province can hear firsthand the tragic stories of these women on local radio, thanks to her efforts. Talking about sexual abuse and murder is no longer forbidden, but has become a weapon against this devastating scourge in the eastern DRC. Namegabe recognized that rape was so prevalent in the region that the stories must be



Namegabe and Rideldphine Katabesha lead the AFEM journalists at a parade marking International Women's Day 2010. AFEM trains women journalists and advocates free speech.



Women's rights activist Chouchou Namegabe testified before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2009 about rape and other forms of violence against women in conflict zones. She stands on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

told to bring about change. She promoted this idea on the radio and among her female journalist coworkers. A practical woman, she backed her words with action. In 2007, despite odds against success, Namegabe organized a campaign in Bukavu she called "Break the Silence: Media Against Sexual Violence." This campaign was universally well-received among peace-loving women, who value the physical integrity of human beings.

Although they live in turbulent areas that suffer sporadic incursions by rebels and other armed militia, many rural women have regained their self-confidence and have overcome the shame of sharing their

tragedy with their friends and family. They gradually are moving past their trauma through speaking out:

"I was raped, and my genitals were mutilated."

"They came with these horrible beards. They ordered me to lie down on the ground. They took off my clothes and raped me in front of my husband and children. There were seven of them, eight. After that I don't remember because I was unconscious."

### **Ending Abuse and Rape as Weapons of War**

The people of South Kivu heard such statements during different on-site radio broadcasts

hosted by AFEM members. Under Chouchou Namegabe's leadership, AFEM developed contacts with women everywhere they went in South Kivu. The results are encouraging. Slowly but surely, women are becoming more comfortable talking about violent sexual abuse and the taboos related to openly discussing sex are disappearing as a result of AFEM's work in South Kivu to raise awareness about the problem. Women have dared to challenge not only rape, but other abusive and discriminatory practices.

Namegabe and her AFEM colleagues have expanded their campaign to reach international audiences. They have attended

hearings at the International Criminal Court at The Hague, where they have convinced other journalists to join their fight to save women in South Kivu from rape and torture as a weapon of war.

Namegabe also appeared before the U.S. Senate to testify about the atrocities committed against Congolese women. She told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in May 2009, “Rape and sexual violence [are] used as a weapon and tactic of war to destroy the community. The rapes are targeted and intentional, and are meant to remove the people from their mineral-rich land through fear, shame, violence, and the intentional spread of HIV throughout entire

families and villages.” Her voice choked with tears, she continued: “We have interviewed over 400 women in South Kivu, and their stories are terrifying. In fact, the word rape fails to truly describe what is happening, because it is not only rape that occurs, but atrocities also accompany the rapes.” A mother was taken with her five children to the forest, Namegabe said, “As each day passed the rebels killed one of her children and forced her to eat her child’s flesh. She begged to be killed but they refused and said ‘No, we can’t give you a good death.’” In other cases women’s genitals were set on fire “not to kill them but to let them suffer.”

Chouchou Namegabe wants

to ensure that these brutalities are recognized in the DRC as crimes against humanity, and the perpetrators prosecuted. She has called for impunity on rape and sexual violence to end, for governments and corporations to “end the profitability of blood minerals” and mandate that Congolese minerals are “conflict free.” She also helps rehabilitate the victims of violence. “Economic recovery is part of the total recovery of the women and their communities,” she told the U.S. senators.

The visible results that this fighter for justice facilitated earned her international recognition, including the prestigious Vital Voices Global Leadership award and the Knight International Journalism award from the International Center for Journalists in Washington, D.C. Namegabe continues to raise awareness about the plight of Congolese women and encourages female victims of sexual violence to break their silence, because there is power in truth.

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**Solange Lusiku**, a journalist in the Democratic Republic of Congo, edits the only newspaper in Bukavu, South Kivu. She worked more than a decade in broadcasting, is married and the mother of five children.



**Ridolphine Katabesha Aganze**, longtime activist for women’s rights, teaches a class on the voting process. She is a reporter, editor and producer for AFEM.

# Gender Equality and Combating Domestic Violence

*By* Qin Liwen

In China, a nongovernment organization called the Anti-Domestic Violence Network has worked to end domestic violence for 10 years through education, social support and advocacy for legislation that protects women.

**Z**heng Guohua, a 51-year-old survivor of domestic violence, speaks in a cheerful voice that belies the two decades of abuse she is describing. In one 1998 incident, Zheng was so severely beaten by her husband that her spleen was ruptured and had to be removed. She says her father, devastated by her mistreatment, died from a brain hemorrhage. “I knelt at my father’s grave, crying and laughing. I told him, ‘Dad, I promise you, I will [have] revenge!’” says Zheng. “I think I was [awakened] by my father’s death. And I realized that this bad guy (her ex-husband) must be punished. I can’t let him harm people anymore!”

An often bruised and terrified Zheng sought help from family members, neighbors, village cadres, county police and the county Women’s Federation. People in her village repeatedly warned her husband and once beat him up, but that didn’t stop his abuse. Police ignored her because “meddling with domestic affairs” was not their duty — and was even considered inappropriate. The poorly-funded local

Women’s Federation couldn’t do anything to help; no one took the organization seriously.

Shaken by the death of her father and determined to do something, in 1999 Zheng ran away from her village home to Shijiazhuang, the provincial capital. Finally, she found help. A letter issued by the Women’s Federation of Hebei Province spurred the local police into action. Her then-husband was arrested and sentenced to four years in jail.

Zheng was lucky. She was supported by an organization that is part of a strong anti-domestic violence movement in China, headed by the Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China Law Association (ADV N). In 2001, a new clause of the Marriage Law made domestic violence illegal. The ADV N played an important role in the adoption of that clause. Today, Zheng is remarried, farming on a piece of rented land in her village.

Inspired by the international gender equality movement and the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, a group of Chinese women activists set up



the ADVN in June 2000. The ADVN is dedicated to achieving gender equality in China. It was the first — and remains the largest — anti-domestic violence organization in China, and it is responsible for significant progress in legislation, investigation and prosecution of crimes, social support and public awareness. “Ten years ago nobody would even think that beating up wives is a crime. Now many people know about it,” says ADVN co-founder, Li Hongtao, who is director of the Library of China Women’s University. “And more and more police, judges and procurators (prosecutors and investigators) are learning that they should take actions against it.”

The ADVN now boasts 118 individual members and 75 group members such as women’s federations, research institutes and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Every three years the ADVN identifies a number of projects and selects the most suitable organizational members to conduct the work. Each project is strictly monitored and evaluated. Most concern education and advocacy about domestic violence.

A co-founder and chief coordinator of the early ADVN project management committee, Chen Mingxia, explains its success. “From the very beginning we chose to associate with the China Law Society, an NGO within the [political] system.



Above: ADVN helped Zheng Guohua when she left her abusive husband. Here she poses with her mother and niece. Left: Chen Mingxia is co-founder of the China Anti-Domestic Violence Network Law Association (ADVN) which helps women escape abusive relationships.



Members of the ADVN Beijing team include: (standing, left to right) Dong Yige, Wu Yuling, Dong Peiling, Liu Xiaojuan, Hou Zhiming (seated), Chen Mingxia, Li Hongtao and Zhang Xiao.

First because we thought legislation is fundamental for the anti-domestic violence movement. Second, the China Law Association has ready access to the essential, relevant government branches like legislative, juridical and public security offices and is trusted by them.” In China, NGOs are strictly regulated by the government’s civil affairs office and are often mistrusted by officials if they are not connected with government. So NGOs such as ADVN use creative, non-confrontational ways

of persuading male officials to accept their ideas. “But we also keep the independent identity and operation as an NGO, so that the prospects and goals of ADVN can be reached relatively smoothly step by step,” says Chen.

The other strategic advantage of the ADVN is its open and democratic structure. It is open to any individual or organization that wants to contribute to the shared goal of stopping domestic abuse of women. Strategic goals are set and big decisions are made democratically among

representatives across the network, no matter how much debate surrounds issues. This keeps ADVN members active and committed to implementing plans.

“I am happy to work here, because people in this organization are all so kind and idealistic. Everyone believes in what they are doing,” says Dong Yige, a young graduate from Chicago University who has worked for ADVN for a year. “The democratic atmosphere is invigorating.”

Born in August 1940, Chen Mingxia thinks her generation was well educated in gender equality by the Communist government founded in 1949. Chen became a researcher at the Institute for Legal Research of the China Academy of Social Sciences, specializing in marriage laws and women's rights, and she was the former Deputy Director of the Marriage Law Association within the China Law

Association. Many ADVN co-founders were scholars, government officials, teachers — elite women of Chen's generation or one generation later.

ADVN activists still see much work ahead. "We have all these extremely successful cases in different regions: community actions against domestic violence in You'anmen, Beijing; or the training program for public security bureau chiefs in

Hunan Province," says Chen. "But these are not enough. We should urge the government to take up the responsibility of anti-domestic violence."

Meanwhile, the ADVN's long-time sponsors, Ford Foundation (United States), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Oxfam Novib (Netherlands) and the Human Rights Center of the University of Oslo (Norway), are changing their sponsorship levels. That means ADVN must learn how to raise funds for its projects — and it is doing so.

"Legislation takes time, and it takes even longer to implement a new law under completely different situations across China. Changing ideas is a gradual process. Too many gaps [need] to be filled. We knew it from the beginning, and we're patient. We will march forward," Chen promises.

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**Qin Liwen** is the Director of News Center, Modern Media Group, China. She has worked for several major print and online publications in Singapore and China since 2000 and is the author of several books, including *News Is Cruel* (2003) and *The Adventure of Ideas* (2004).



The China office of the international organization Stop Domestic Violence distributes posters that provide contacts and information for abused women.





CHAPTER

# 5



## WOMEN, GIRLS AND ARMED CONFLICT

Armed conflict disrupts families and has significant negative consequences for women. Although they are victims of war, they may also be agents of peace. Displaced Sudanese women, driven from their villages by Janjaweed militia, shelter at the Abu Shouk refugee camp in Darfur, Sudan.

# WOMEN, GIRLS AND ARMED CONFLICT

*By* Dyan Mazurana

**W**omen and girls experience armed conflict much the same way men and boys do. They are killed, injured, disabled and tortured. They are targeted with weapons and suffer social and economic dislocation. They suffer the psychosocial impact as loved ones die or they witness violence against their families and neighbors. They suffer the effects of violence before, during and after flight from a combat zone. They are at heightened risk of diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. They are affected by the resource depletion resulting from armed conflict. They join, or are forced to join, armed forces or insurgency movements. They care for the wounded, sick, despairing and displaced, and may be among the most outspoken advocates for peace.

## Significant and Lasting Harm

There is a growing body of evidence (ICRC 2001, UNIFEM 2002) that the long-term impact of armed conflict on women and girls may be exacerbated by their social vulnerability. The harm done to women and girls during and after armed conflict is significant, and often exposes them to further harm and violence. Gender-based and sexual violence such as rape, forced marriage, forced impregnation, forced



abortion, torture, trafficking, sexual slavery and the intentional spread of STDs, including HIV/AIDS, are weapons of warfare integral to many of today's conflicts. Women are victims of genocide and enslaved for labor. Women and girls are often viewed as culture bearers and reproducers of "the enemy" and thus become prime targets. Women are exploited

Sporadic fighting between Thai and Cambodian troops on Thailand's northeast border drove these women and children to a refugee camp in Surin province.



because of their maternal responsibilities and attachments, which heighten their vulnerability to abuse.

Armed conflicts also have indirect negative consequences that affect agriculture, livelihoods, infrastructure, public health and welfare provision, gravely disrupting the social order. Research shows that these repercussions affect women more adversely than men. As noted by Plümper and Neumayer (2006), while women typically live longer than men in peacetime, armed conflict decreases the gap between female and male life expectancy. Heavily ethnicized conflicts or wars within “failed states” are significantly more damaging to women’s health and life expectancy than other civil wars.

### Women as Agents of War and Peace

Women and girls are not merely victims of armed conflict. They are active agents. They make choices, possess critical perspectives on their situations and organize collectively in response to those situations. Women and girls can perpetrate violence and can support violence perpetrated by others. They become active members of conflict because they are committed to the political, religious or economic goals of those involved in violence. This can mean, and has meant, taking up arms in liberation struggles, resistance to occupation or participation in struggles against inequality on race, ethnic, religious or class/caste lines.

Women and girls are also often active in peace processes before, during and

Somalian women gather with their children at the Dadaab refugee camp in Eastern Kenya.

after conflicts. Many women know the importance of peace processes and join a variety of grass-roots peace-building efforts aimed at rebuilding the economic, political, social and cultural fabric of their societies. In 1991, as the war in the Balkans was gaining momentum, Women in Black launched an antiwar campaign in the Balkans. In Fiji, as the tensions between Indo-Fijians and indigenous peoples were getting worse, leading to the coup d'état that occurred in 2000, women from both ethnic groups created the Blue Ribbon Campaign peace movement (Anderlini, 2007).

However, formalized processes of peace, including negotiations, accords and reconstruction plans, frequently exclude women's and girls' meaningful

participation. Too often, women and girls actively involved in rebuilding local economies and civil society are pushed into the background when formal peace processes begin.

### **Post-Conflict Gains in Gender Relations**

Finally, women and girls may gain from the changed gender relations that result from armed conflict. They sometimes acquire new status, skills and power that result from taking on new responsibilities when male heads of household are absent or deceased. These changes in women's roles can challenge existing social norms. Women's participation in household decisionmaking, civil society and the local

Bosnian Muslim women grieve among coffins of victims of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre. The remains were unearthed in 2010. The massacre shattered lives of widows and families of the 8,000 killed by Bosnian Serb troops in 1995.





economy and their ownership of land or goods may be altered, sometimes — although not always — to their benefit.

The specific experience of women and girls in armed conflicts greatly depends upon their status in societies before armed conflict breaks out. Where cultures of violence and discrimination against women and girls exist prior to conflict, these abuses are likely to be exacerbated during conflict. Similarly, if women are not allowed to be part of decisionmaking before conflict, it is usually extremely difficult for them to become involved in decisions during the conflict itself or the peace process and post-conflict period. Thus, gender relations

in pre-conflict situations as shaped by ethnicity, class, caste and age often set the stage for women's and girls' experiences and options during and after armed conflict.

The international community is increasingly aware of and responsive to the impact of armed conflict on women and girls (as shown, for instance, by the unanimous adoption in October 2001 of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which included the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction) and the importance of their participation in peace processes and the post-conflict period. Of paramount importance in any strategy to promote and attain women's and girls' rights during and after conflict is a context-specific, grounded understanding of how the conflict has affected different groups of women and their families.

**Anti-Indian violence in Fiji displaced thousands in 2000, such as this woman and girl in a refugee camp near Lautoka, Fiji.**

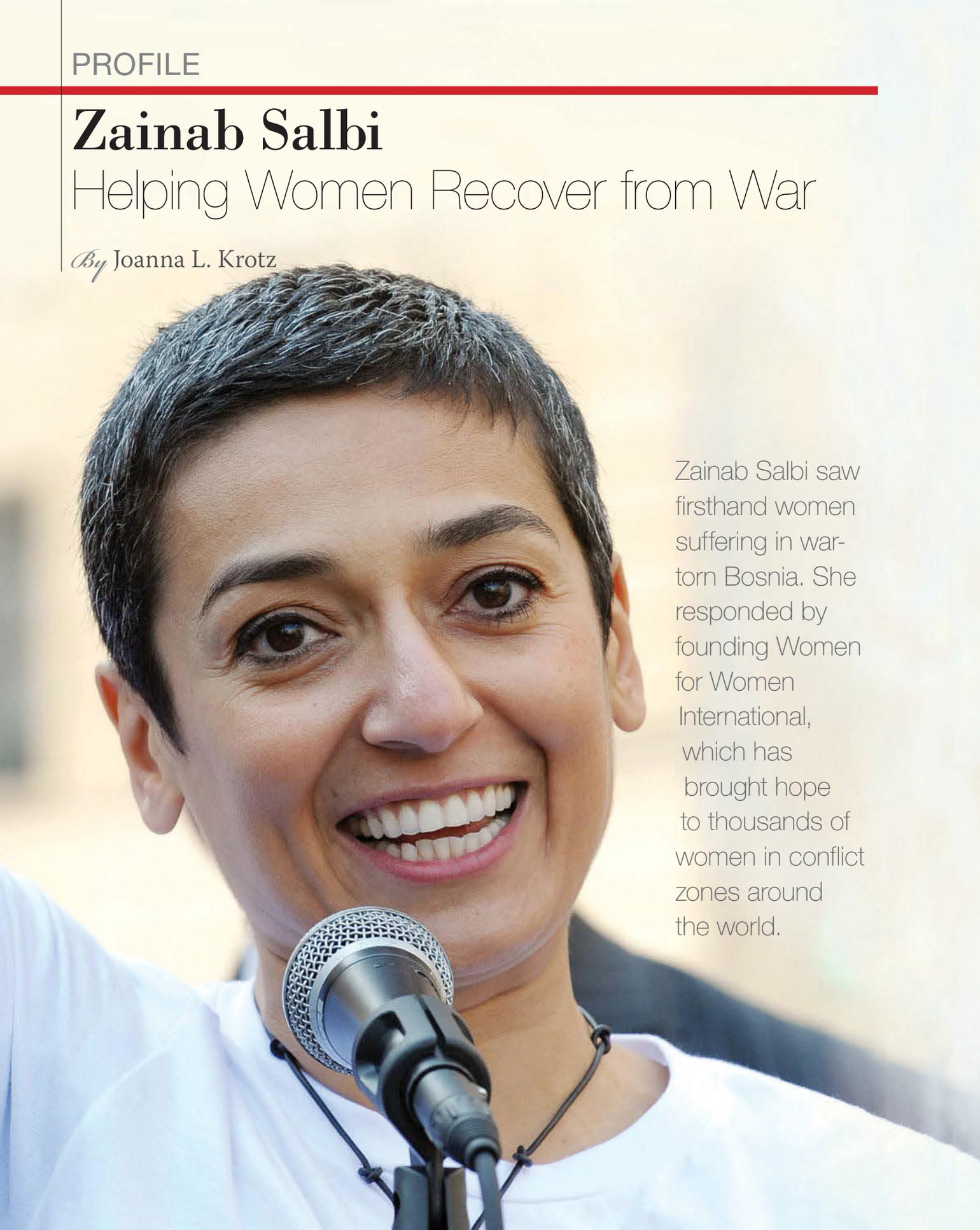
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# Zainab Salbi

## Helping Women Recover from War

*By* Joanna L. Krotz



Zainab Salbi saw firsthand women suffering in war-torn Bosnia. She responded by founding Women for Women International, which has brought hope to thousands of women in conflict zones around the world.

Charismatic and forthright, Zainab Salbi instantly grabs your attention. And that's even before you see her resume or hear her compelling personal story.

At age 41, she is recognized around the world as the founder and chief executive officer of Women for Women International, a nongovernmental organization that helps women survivors of war to rebuild their lives. Over its 17-year history, Women for Women has distributed nearly \$80 million in direct aid, microcredit loans and programs

serving more than 250,000 women worldwide. Known as a fierce and effective champion, Salbi travels constantly, working with local groups to secure women's safety and economic prosperity in some of the world's most devastated regions, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sudan and Afghanistan. Yet little in Zainab Salbi's fairytale childhood could have foretold such a calling.

Growing up in the privileged precincts of Baghdad, she was the cherished daughter of an elite Iraqi family. Her early years were an idyllic blur

of school and family outings, with lessons in piano and ballet. In her best-selling memoir, *Between Two Worlds*, published in 2005, Salbi describes sunlit days of driving around in the family car alongside her mother, shopping, running errands, paying social calls: "As we drove ... along the boulevards lined with palm trees heavy with dates ... I took in my city through the passenger-side window — old Baghdad with its dark arcaded *souk* [market] where men hammered out copper and politics, and the new Baghdad with its cafes and Al-Mansour boutiques." Most



Zainab Salbi meets with women in Rwanda.



Women for Women founder and CEO Zainab Salbi, far left, and Afghan-American actress Azita Ghanizada, far right, lead a peace march across the Brooklyn Bridge, organized in collaboration with Google, on the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, March 8, 2011 in New York.

everything Salbi learned in her early years, she writes, came through her adored mother.

Life changed when she turned 11, although it would be years before she could pinpoint the shift. Saddam Hussein assumed power and soon anointed Salbi's father, a commercial aviator, as the ruler's personal pilot. Increasingly, through Salbi's

teenage years, the family felt the effects of Saddam's regime, both his patronage and his oppressive heel. She recalls halcyon weekends at Saddam's compound, calling him "Amo" or "Uncle," playing with his kids around the pool and, as she was constantly cautioned, willfully ignoring the fear and violence rising around her. Later, living in the

United States, particularly after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, that intimacy with Saddam would haunt her. "I kept it a secret and told no one," she says. "I was afraid if I told people I knew Saddam, my face would be erased and all anyone would see in me was Saddam."

When Salbi was 19, her progressive mother suddenly announced that she'd arranged a marriage for Salbi to a much older Iraqi banker living in America. "It was very painful," says Salbi. "My mother had always told me not to depend on any man. She was passionate, adamant about it. Then all of a sudden I was being whisked away from home. I had no idea what she was talking about." Twenty years on, you still hear the hurt, the loss and indignation in Salbi's voice. Dutifully, Salbi went off to be a bride in Chicago.

And she landed in a nightmare. "The man who was my husband turned out to be abusive," she says. When Salbi proved unbowed, he raped her. She walked out after three months. "I had \$7 in my pocket, some designer clothes on my back and about \$20 a week from family funds to survive," she says.

It was 1990 and Saddam had just invaded Kuwait. After Operation Desert Storm was launched, there was no going home to Iraq for Salbi.

Over time, she built a life in the United States. It was years before she saw her family again. And years after that, when her mother was ill and dying, that Salbi finally found the voice to ask why she'd been sent away. Saddam had his eye on you, her mother told her. The only escape route from becoming Saddam's plaything was an arranged marriage on another continent.

In 1993, Salbi was living in Washington, remarried to a Palestinian student named Amjad Atallah, when she read a news story about the Bosnian war and rape camps where some 20,000 women were raped. The couple decided to travel to Bosnia to help.

Salbi and Atallah returned to Washington determined to find a group that would provide aid for Bosnian rape victims. But none existed. So, still on a student budget, the couple founded their own organization, Women for Women, and began to help the women in the Balkans.

By 2004, Salbi, now divorced, had expanded Women for Women to its international mission. Appearances on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, which draws millions of viewers, boosted both her profile and the organization as donations climbed. In the 15 years since arriving in the United States, Salbi became a prominent humanitarian and an award-winning women's rights advocate, honored by President Bill Clinton for her work in Bosnia. What hadn't changed were her secrets about Saddam and her first marriage.

On a trip to the eastern Congo that year, Salbi was interviewing a woman named Nabito, then age 52. Rebels had raped Nabito and her three daughters. "There were so many she said she couldn't tell how many were around and how many had raped her," says Salbi, remembering.

Salbi asked Nabito whether she wanted her story kept quiet. Instead, says Salbi, "she said, 'If I could tell my story to the whole world, I would, so other women would not have to go through what I've gone through. So you go and tell my story.'"

Nabito's courage — and her resilient conviction — pushed Salbi into breaking her own silence. Owning her past also has changed the way Zainab Salbi works. "Before, I'd be the humanitarian worker with connections and aid interviewing other women. Now, I am their equal. I'm not there to save anyone. I actually am one of the women I'm trying to help."

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**Joanna L. Krotz** is a multimedia journalist and speaker whose work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Worth*, *Money* and *Town & Country* and on MSN and Entrepreneurship.org. She is the author of *The Guide to Intelligent Giving* and founder of the Women's Giving Institute, an organization that educates donors about strategic philanthropy.

# Liberia: Female Peacekeepers Smash Stereotypes

*By* Bonnie Allen

Since its groundbreaking deployment in 2007, India has sent four all-female police units to Liberia, each serving a one-year rotation. Their success in the postwar country has inspired other nations to defy tradition and deploy more female troops in U.N. peacekeeping roles.

**F**ive days after an elaborate marriage ceremony in southern India, 28-year-old Rewti Arjunan traded her red silk sari for a blue camouflage police uniform and flew to the West African country of Liberia.

The young bride is serving in one of the world's few all-female police units deployed to a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

"In India, we are quite traditional with these things. My husband, he was against it," admits Arjunan, who had never before traveled outside India. The trained police officer gave her future husband an ultimatum.

"I told him, 'If you permit me to go on this mission, I will marry you.'"

Now, Arjunan's life is anything but traditional. She is helping to change the face of international policing in a post-conflict country.

Since its groundbreaking deployment in 2007, India has sent four Female Formed Police Units (FFPU) to Liberia, each serving a one-year rotation. More than 100 female police officers trained in crowd control and

conflict resolution make up the FFPU at any one time. They are supported by about two dozen men who serve as drivers, cooks and logistical coordinators.

The FFPU is primed for rapid response to any violence that might erupt in this country of 3.8 million, which still lacks a strong army or armed police force.

Two bloody civil wars, between 1989 and 1996, and again from 1999 to 2006, killed about 250,000 Liberians, displaced hundreds of thousands more, traumatized women with rampant sexual violence, destroyed infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and roads, and corrupted the justice system.

Eight years after the war ended, almost 9,500 U.N. peacekeepers help maintain the fragile peace.

"The greatest deed is to protect humanity. I got this chance, and I thought, 'I want to live this,'" says Arjunan.

The Female Formed Police Unit is a symbol of progress for U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which stipulates that

A member of the United Nations first all-female peacekeeping force stands guard with fellow officers after arriving at the Monrovia, Liberia, airport.





An all-female United Nations peacekeeping unit from India arrives in Monrovia, Liberia.

peacekeeping missions support women's participation in post-conflict peace building.

The United Nations' ultimate goal is gender parity in the civilian, military and police sectors, but, globally, women make up just 8.2 percent of roughly 13,000 U.N. police and only two percent of military police.

India has scored high marks for pioneering an all-female police unit, serving alongside other female officers from Nigeria and elsewhere, in a country that boasts Africa's first female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

By day, the Indian police officers stand in the hot sun

guarding the president's office, and, by night, they patrol crime-ridden areas of the capital, Monrovia.

As the rain trickles down on the dark streets of Monrovia's Congo Town, Arjunan sits in the back seat of a U.N. police vehicle with her hair tucked inside a blue beret and a pistol strapped to her waist. Beside her, 25-year-old Pratiksha Parab holds an AK-47 rifle and peers out the window.

Their job is to protect Liberia National Police (LNP) officers, who are not armed, as they patrol to deter armed robberies and rape. "Most of the violent crimes are at night, and

the criminals use weapons," says LNP Commander Gus Hallie. "So, with our FFPU counterparts on our side, with arms, we feel we can battle with criminals."

As they patrol, the U.N. police observer and the LNP officer joke that "Indian women are tough." Arjunan smiles, pleased, but she explains why she is a good peacekeeper.

"Women are not aggressive. We come in a polite way. This presence can maintain the peace. We are loving by nature."

There are many stereotypes attached to female peacekeepers: more nurturing, more communicative, less intimidating.

The label that makes Contingent Commander Usher Kiran cringe, though, is “soft.”

“I don’t think there is a difference between female and male,” says Kiran, a 22-year police veteran, as she sits under a poster of Mahatma Gandhi.

“If you are putting on the same uniform, you are doing the same duty, you are having the same authority as the males.”

“Where we found a difference [between male and female peacekeepers] is in their perceptions of their role,” explains the U.N.’s gender adviser in Liberia, Carole Doucet. “The women see themselves as more broadly involved in the community.”

Doucet says the U.N.’s female police, known as “blue helmettes,” have inspired Liberian women to join the national police force. In 2007, only six percent of Liberia’s police were women. Today, that proportion has risen to 15 percent, with roughly 600 female officers.

The Indian women also sponsor an orphanage, teach self-defense and computer classes to local women, and — despite limited English — reach out to survivors of sexual abuse.

“I can be scared to talk to a man,” whispers a 16-year-old rape victim, who cannot be identified, at a safe home for girls in Monrovia. “A woman is better. She is like an auntie or mother.”

India’s all-female unit has inspired Bangladesh and Nigeria to create their own, while countries such as Rwanda and Ghana also are ramping up their female troop contributions to U.N. missions. Back at the Indian headquarters in Monrovia, Arjunan talks to her new husband over the Internet, using a webcam, for at least an hour every day. Although she’s a little homesick, Arjunan says she is proud to follow in the footsteps of other courageous women in India’s history.

“Many freedom fighters were ladies ... fighting for justice. Fighting for good things.”



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton greets a U.N. peacekeeper in Monrovia. Clinton has strongly supported Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in promoting democracy and development. In 2010 USAID invested more than \$11 million in programs for women’s empowerment.

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**Bonnie Allan** is a freelance journalist working in Liberia, West Africa. She worked as a journalist in Canada for more than a decade and holds a master’s degree in international human rights law from the University of Oxford.





CHAPTER

# 6



## WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

A small loan allowed this woman to go into business selling spices in a Tbilisi neighborhood market.

# WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

*By* Susanne E. Jalbert

In 1995, activists from 189 countries pondered gender equity at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the parallel nongovernmental organization conference in Huairou. They developed a plan to ensure a more equitable future for women with passion, foresight and intensive focus. Today we scrutinize how far we have progressed toward gender parity since the 12-point Platform for Action was introduced in Beijing. And we ask what can be done now to more efficiently promote women's economic potential and equalize their opportunities with those of men. There has been progress, but not enough.

More equitable economic engagement for women remains elusive. Women perform two-thirds of the world's work, especially in agriculture, for 10 percent of the income (InterAction, 2009); own only 1 percent of the assets ([www.online-womeninpolitics.org](http://www.online-womeninpolitics.org)); and constitute 70 percent of the world's poor (International Labor Organization). "Whether women are working in industrialized nations or developing countries, in rural or urban settings, most women still carry the triple burden of raising children, performing household chores and earning an income for their family," was the finding of the 2010 Soroptimist International white paper "Women at Work."



## Women's Earnings Still Lag Behind Men's

Women's earnings linger below men's worldwide. In Middle Eastern and North African countries, women's wages are around 30 percent of men's; 40 percent in Latin America and South Asia; 50 percent in sub-Saharan Africa; and 60-70 percent in East Asia and developed countries. In 2009, 134 countries were evaluated on five economic performance indicators which

A designer at the Leather and Shoe Research Institute in Hanoi, Vietnam, works to improve Vietnamese shoemakers' product lines and competitive edge.



show that the Middle East has the widest gender gap in economic opportunity (*The Global Gender Gap Report 2009*).

Evidence from developed countries substantiates the possibility for fair economic expectations. According to *Building Gender Balanced Business*, in the United States, women make 80 percent of consumer goods purchasing decisions; in Canada, women start 70 percent of new small businesses; in the UK, women will own 60 percent of all personal wealth by 2025; worldwide today there are more female millionaires between the age of 18 and 44 than male. But current data gathered by the United Nations from developing, transitioning and conflict-torn economies indicate that women are still marginalized. They are either absent or poorly represented in economic decisions and policymaking.

Formulation of appropriate gender-neutral policy acts as a framework to support balanced, effective and good governance. It functions as a catalyst for healthy economic growth and cogent interaction of societies' three sectors: public, private and business. Most women have no equitable access to assets, credit, capital or property rights (International Center for Research on Women). Therefore, effective gender-neutral policies are needed.

In Chisinau, Moldova, founder and director of the International Center for Advancement of Women in Business Tatiana Batushkina has many policy concerns. They include creating an environment where women can interact with one another, know their full rights in society, share ecological concerns, solve economic obstacles and eliminate public resistance

Women embroider traditional cloth with gold thread for sale on the Uzbekistan market.

to women in business. In Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, founder and director of the Women's Committee for Legal Change Bayan Mahmoud Zahran's Number 1 policy concern is to answer the question, "How can one enhance economic literacy and legal awareness to reach an apex of justice?" As a business owner in Ukraine, Elena Baryshnikova focuses on loosening the reign of restrictive commercial regulations. She is founder and director of Lex-Service Audit in Sevastopol, Ukraine, and Business Education Alliance ([www.bea.com.ua](http://www.bea.com.ua)) in Kyiv, Ukraine.

### Progress in Closing Gender Gap

There are hopeful signs. Out of the 115 countries covered in the 2009 World Economic Forum's report, since 2006 more than two-thirds have posted gains in overall gender gap index scores, indicating that the world, in general, has made progress toward lessening inequities (*The Global Gender Gap Report 2009*).

Female participation in the private sector in large and small, formal and informal enterprises is a crucial economic driver for societies — anywhere in the world. "What should economic self-sufficiency look like?" pondered Nino Elizbarashvili, president of the Georgian Association of Women in Business in Tbilisi, Georgia, during an interview. Economic security can beneficially touch every facet of a woman's life and can manifest in a myriad of ways, including positive impact on the health, education and vitality of families, freedom to consume and produce and the ability to more fully contribute to civic and political transformation.

In Kurdistan Suzan Aref, director of the Women's Empowerment Organization ([www.womenempowerment-iraq.com/index.htm](http://www.womenempowerment-iraq.com/index.htm)), wondered, "Could we, as women, break more barriers? How can we better promote security, women's rights as human rights, gender equity, political participation and economic engagement?" One specific step is to bridge the gender gap with women's economic empowerment and education by promoting inclusion of women in economic activities in elementary school. Other solutions are these: laws must be reformed, land allocation practices changed, access to justice enhanced and market entry obstructions eradicated. The economic



Entrepreneur Rissikatou Otekpola poses in her jewelry shop in Cotonou, Benin. Microcredit helped her start a small business.



benefits of scaling back barriers to women's engagement in the workforce are substantial; as observed in the *Global Gender Gap Report*, between 2006 and 2009, of 115 countries surveyed, 98 (85 percent) improved performance. When women acquire access to and control over economic resources, they increase productivity and their incomes. Their ability to feed, clothe and educate their families thereby increases.

Women's economic questions are wide-ranging, and the list of policy hurdles to be resolved is long. If we truly desire to live in equitable societies, we must act in this moment. At this moment, policy is top priority. Whether policy is decided publicly or in some secluded government chamber, the point is that policy is essential to determining the direction of our world. Women's voices must be

heard to transform and improve current economic conditions. To promote progress, public, private and business sectors worldwide must unite in actionable policy agendas to ensure an equitable future.

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**Susanne E. Jalbert** is a leading economic activist and the architect of the Iraqi Small Business Development Centers program. She champions women's business association capacity building worldwide. She publishes and speaks frequently on the role and impact of business associations, women entrepreneurs, anti-trafficking campaigns and entrepreneurial expansion programs.

Women sort chillies in a field near Ahmedabad, India. Worldwide, millions of women work in agriculture.

PROFILE

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# Lubna Olayan

Saudi Businesswoman Strengthens  
Communities

*By* Scott Bortot



As head of the Olayan Financing Company, Lubna Olayan oversees the operations of dozens of international firms. But what many people don't know is that the Cornell University graduate is dedicated to building her society by working with grassroots organizations throughout the Arab world.

**L**ubna Olayan is known in Saudi Arabia and around the world for her business acumen. The chief executive of the Olayan Financing Company, Olayan oversees the workings of more than three dozen companies with operations both inside and outside the kingdom. But Olayan, selected by *Time* magazine in 2005 as one of its top 100 most influential people, has a side to her that goes beyond business. When she is not running companies, she empowers communities by working with and supporting nongovernmental organizations.

"Grass-roots organizations can touch on social issues, taboo issues, in ways that are impossible for businesses to do," Olayan said. "That's their role and they don't have the same stakes as businesses have. They also have time and energy to focus on key issues which businesses can only address marginally."

Since 2002, Olayan has been a member of the board of trustees of the Arab Thought Foundation, which honors "[Arab] pioneers, supporting the innovators and sponsoring the talented from among the Arab nations." But her community work doesn't stop there. In 2006, she joined the board of directors for Alfannar, an organization that supports grass-roots organizations in the Arab world.

Lubna Olayan was born in Saudi Arabia in 1955. Her father,

Suliman Olayan, was a powerful business leader who founded the Olayan Group in 1947. Early in her career at the Olayan Group, she worked closely with her father. Even though they had a warm relationship, at work it was all business. Olayan and her father made a deal that at the office they were no longer father and daughter but boss and employee.

### **Education a Key to Success**

Olayan, who holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture from Cornell University and a master's degree in business administration from Indiana University, understands the value of education. In turn, educational institutions have honored her. Cornell named the 1977 graduate as its 2010 "Entrepreneur of the Year." David Skorton, president of Cornell University, said Olayan has "aspired to leadership roles in the business world, and she has received enormous recognition for her business skills."

Delivering a speech at Cornell to accept the honor, Olayan recalled the role played by the university in forming her character. "It is important to encourage our people to come up with ideas, and to allow people to make mistakes," she said, adding that she learned this lesson at Cornell. "I very much enjoyed the diversity of the student body."

Olayan is active in developing Saudi education. As an advisory member of the board of Effat University, an educational institution for women in Saudi Arabia, she especially understands the meaning of education to women in her country. "Education is the single most important driver in improving society, in Saudi Arabia but also anywhere in the world," Olayan said.

### Bringing More Women to the Workplace

A member of the board of directors of INSEAD, an international, multicampus graduate business school, Olayan has a lot to say about the advancement of Saudi women in business. For starters, men and women working together is a recipe for success. "You need two hands to clap," Olayan said. "It is a natural progression and a natural fit of the building of a society."

At a certain level, the segregation of some business practices empowered Saudi women. "Initially, yes, female-only services opened the door to women for greater participation in the economic life of the country," Olayan said. "Going forward though, one can hope that segregation will not continue."

To raise the number of female professionals, who currently make up only six percent of the Saudi workforce, she established the Olayan National Women's



Women employees help to put women buyers at ease at a car showroom in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Action for Recruitment and Development (ONWARD) in 2004. The program accepts recruits and trains them in skills that can be used in a range of professions. While most of the recruits are fresh university

graduates, the goal is to prepare them for executive leadership positions in the future.

The end of workplace segregation may not be too far off, judging from recent moves by the Saudi government.

Olayan said a government decree greatly improved the situation for Saudi women seeking access to employment opportunities. The move opened up most of the job market to women beyond the traditional sectors of health care and education. “One of the major keys to a woman’s business success in Saudi Arabia is ensuring that she gets the equal opportunity to contribute and participate in the country’s economic development,” Olayan said.

When women began working in the offices of Olayan’s companies, she remembers a change took place. “I think it did make it a little different. We were all men until women came over and for one, in my opinion, it made a lot of the younger

Saudis be alert that there is competition,” Olayan said. “There is an alternative if you don’t come in on time.”

Despite the government decree, workplace challenges still remain for Saudi women. “The implementation has been quite slow as there are still large organizations that have not opened their doors to Saudi women yet,” Olayan said.

### Keep the Goal in Sight

Olayan, a member of the International Business Council of the World Economic Forum, said Saudi men and women interested in opening a business in Saudi Arabia — or anywhere else — should first do their homework. “You have to have a goal and you

measure your progression. You better have all the ingredients required and know all of the ingredients to achieve your plan,” she said. “You should measure it regularly in case you get sidetracked. Bring yourself back ... and get focused.”

Keeping on her career course, from the time she joined Morgan Guaranty in New York in 1983 until today, is a hallmark of Olayan’s success. “When you are passionate about something, you have to make it a success and be proud of the success that you have achieved with it,” she said.

Through it all, what makes Olayan most happy is much closer to her heart. “The bottom line, although I’m proud of many things, I am most proud of my three daughters above anything.”



Cottage industries provide income for women in and outside the home. This woman shows her basket weaving expertise at a travel and tourism fair in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

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**Scott Bortot** is a staff writer for the International Information Programs bureau of the State Department.

# Women's Work: Paying It Forward

*By* Joanna L. Krotz

A one-to-one mentoring program set up by *Fortune's* Most Powerful Women Summit and the U.S. State Department connects America's top businesswomen with young women leaders around the world to strengthen careers and communities.

**I**t's easy to get things done with women," says Ilham Zhiri, sipping a latte and nibbling a muffin early one morning at a bustling Starbucks café in New York City. "Women connect right away and they seem to have this instinct to help each other. You feel that everywhere you go," she says, waving a hand to embrace the world. "In the States, you feel it. Back home, you feel it. You even feel it on a diplomatic level."

Zhiri knows a thing or two about how women accomplish things. For the past 15 years, she's been running a family printing and publishing company in her hometown of Rabat, Morocco, while devoting time to support younger women in business across the Middle East. "In the beginning, as a freshly graduated MBA, it was very hard for me," says Zhiri, explaining why she reaches out to other women. "At home, because of the cultural context, a woman has to put in double effort and energy to prove herself — to other women as well as to men. But once you do, that's it. Recognition is there."

That clear-eyed passion for spearheading social and economic change and the desire to expand her own skills motivated Zhiri to apply to the unique program that returned her to the United States. Years before, she had studied at American University in Washington. Now, Zhiri was in New York for the finale of the *Fortune*/U.S. State Department Global Women's Mentoring Partnership. Each year, this public/private program selects 30 to 35 up-and-coming women professionals from around the world, pairing them with 50 senior American women from business, academia and government.

## **Public-Private Partnership Networks Empower New Leaders**

The month-long program creatively leverages the resources and expertise of an unusual three-part alliance: an elite roster of American women from companies such as Avon, Wal-Mart, American Express and ExxonMobil who participate in *Fortune* magazine's annual



Above: Global Mentoring Partnership participants (left to right) Jin Yan, Aicholpon Jourbekova, Josephine Kairaba, Ilham Zhiri, Amany Eid, Rosin McCarthy and Lara Ayoub gather in front of the White House during their visit to Washington, D.C. Left: Josephine Kairaba (Rwanda), Anna Grishchenkova (Russia) and Hussan-Bano Burki (Pakistan) interact with Ambassador Melanne Verveer at the Global Mentoring Partnership meeting.

Most Powerful Women Summit, chaired by Editor-at-Large Pattie Sellers; the international nongovernmental organization Vital Voices, whose mission is to empower emerging women leaders worldwide; and the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

The idea was born in 2006 during a meeting between Sellers and then-Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Dina Powell in Washington. The *Fortune*/U.S. State Department Global Women's Mentoring Partnership was soon launched. It debuted as a three-phase program for 17 women. They received orientation in Washington, individual mentorship around the United States and evaluation in New York. It was an immediate success. Today the program boasts nearly 150 graduates from about 50 countries. Powell, now head of corporate engagement at Goldman Sachs and director of its sister initiative, 10,000 Women, remains a key sponsor.

"The Mentoring Partnership offers women a transformative model of leadership," explains Alyse Nelson, president and CEO of Vital Voices, which is awarded ECA grants — about \$190,000 in 2010 — to manage on-the-ground logistics. Typically, the women are first-generation professionals who lack role models at home. So the firsthand coaching is an enormous boost,



Egyptian mentee Amany Eid is business development manager for Cairo-based financial website [www.mubasher.info](http://www.mubasher.info) and a freelance writer. She also mentors younger people, teaching them job search and resume writing skills.

emotionally and practically. Just as importantly, says Nelson, "participants know that top women in *Fortune* 500 companies don't need to take time and effort for mentoring, but they do. The younger women see the ripple effect of doing well and also doing good. They understand the investment being made in them and their responsibility to give back."

Now in its fifth year, the program is well established. "We cable our embassies and regional bureaus, which identify and nominate local women for the program," says ECA managing director of cultural programs Chris Miner, who oversees thousands of State Department exchange programs. "Obviously, they must have a good command

of English," says Miner. "But the women must also be emerging leaders who participate to take their skills, career or business to the next level. These women are destined for success." Pattie Sellers invites high-level American businesswomen to volunteer. Their companies cover one participant's travel and expenses, about \$8,000 each. Working with a *Fortune* team, Sellers then customizes each match.

"We learn from each other," says Susan Whiting, a four-time mentor and vice chair of the Nielsen Company, the global marketing and media information firm. "For me, it's especially valuable to see the U.S. through their eyes." Paired with Ilham Zhiri this year, Whiting has noticed a pattern among the

mentees. “Younger women on their way to success often feel they have to put some parts of themselves aside, and I don’t think that’s necessarily a good thing in the long term,” she says. “To succeed, you need to be true to yourself.”

## Destined for Success

Reviewing her experience at Nielsen, Zhiri says she’s returning to Morocco with two objectives. “First, I’ve learned ... that I can leverage business opportunities in the North Africa region.” The second goal, managing a clear work/life balance, surprised her. “There’s a wonderful

phrase I learned here — about ‘repotting’ yourself,” says Zhiri. “You need to grow your personal life in order to grow your business. I learned that I don’t have to be so tough on myself.”

The final, fast-paced week in New York was a high-octane mix of media training sessions, entrepreneurship workshops, panel discussions and networking events, hosted by industry leaders.

“I applied to the program because I wanted to see how I measure up compared to leaders in the U.S.,” says Hussan-Bano Burki, a senior manager for USAID in Islamabad.

She works to facilitate trade and develop online marketing

tools. “In Pakistan, I’m already known as a good leader and my skills are pretty much there.”

Teamed with Ernst & Young’s Beth A. Brooke, Burki said, “Here, I saw mentors who went beyond professional duties to build networks and pay it forward.” The revelation, for Burki, was seeing how Brooke used her contacts to approach unfamiliar sources and facilitate policy. “Within the first few days at E&Y, I recognized that I’d been missing the idea of using networks as assets and how I need to be less bashful about asking for help. Beth connected to so many institutions and people relevant to things I’ve done. The practical power of that was a great lesson.” All in all, Burki adds, “I learned what’s important to rise up professionally.”

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**Joanna L. Krotz** is a multimedia journalist and speaker whose work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Worth*, *Money*, and *Town & Country* and on MSN and Entrepreneurship.org. She is the author of *The Guide to Intelligent Giving* and founder of the Women’s Giving Institute, an organization that educates donors about strategic philanthropy.



Ugandan entrepreneur Rehmah Kasule started Century Marketing in 1998. She consults on strategic planning, branding and entrepreneur development, mentoring women to achieve her goal: Empowering Ugandan women and making them economically independent. She writes for leading daily newspaper *New Vision*, is a motivational speaker and is currently consultant for the National Export Strategy (NES) a government initiative that supports women in exports. Here Kasule participates in the international Vital Voices-sponsored Global Mentoring Walk.





CHAPTER

# 7



## WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION- MAKING

Women make significant contributions to civil society, yet around the world their representation in government is limited. Here a Kuwaiti woman flashes the victory sign in Kuwait City after their parliament, in May 2005, passed a historic law that allows women to participate actively in politics.

# WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISIONMAKING

*By* Lori S. Ashford

**A**round the world, women's lack of representation in government, especially in high-level executive and legislative bodies, limits their influence over governance and public policies. Arguably, women's participation in decisionmaking is essential for ensuring their equality and rights. Where women have participated actively in public policy, they have been able to raise the visibility of women's issues and work toward ending gender discrimination. But women have made slow progress in the political arena, even while making impressive gains in other areas such as education, employment and health.

## Women's Political Participation: Facts and Figures

Women's representation in legislative bodies has increased in most parts of the world, but it is still at a low level. In 1990, the United Nations called for women to hold a "critical mass" of 30 percent of parliamentary seats — a level believed to be sufficient to bring about change in national politics. Twenty years later, only 26 countries out of 186 reached or exceeded the 30 percent mark of women's representation in the single or lower house of parliament, according to the International Parliamentary Union. In the United States, women held 16.8 percent of seats



in the House of Representatives in 2010, slightly lower than the world average of 19 percent of lawmakers in the lower houses worldwide. (Women in National Parliaments: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>)

These global figures conceal large regional disparities: Women make up 42 percent of parliament in Scandinavian nations but just 12 percent of Arab assemblies. A few African countries top the list: In Rwanda and South Africa, women hold 56 percent and 45 percent of seats,

Activist Rola Dashti, left, and Kuwait's first woman cabinet minister Dr. Masouma Al Mubarak celebrate with supporters after passage of a bill in Kuwait's parliament that gives women the right to vote and run for public office.



respectively. In Sweden, women occupy 45 percent of parliamentary seats.

Progress in women's representation in the executive branches of government is even slower. In 2010, just 11 of 192

heads of government were women. Globally, women hold only 16 percent of ministerial posts. Finland stands out in this category, with 63 percent of Cabinet-level posts held by women.

Above: Residents of Kigali, Rwanda, march in support of women's rights. Rwanda is noteworthy for its high proportion of women in public office. Left: Two powerful voices for women are Nigerian democracy and civil rights activist Hafsat Abiola, left, and former Irish president Mary Robinson, here at a women's leadership summit in Cape Town, South Africa.

## Why Women Lack Political Power

The low proportion of women in political decisionmaking positions reflects men's historical advantages in electoral systems and long-standing inequalities between men and women in society. At home, school, the workplace and elsewhere, girls and women typically have fewer opportunities than their male counterparts to acquire policy and leadership skills. The political arena may be least amenable to increased diversity and gender equality because it is often informal and subject to the rules of the "old-boy network."

Democracy on its own does not create a path for women to become leaders. In fact, two of the oldest democracies, the United States and France, have low percentages of women in elected office. In most societies, women have limited access to the conventional avenues of power such as political parties, business organizations and labor unions. Lacking connections and clout, they find it harder to raise money for political campaigns. Thus, women often enter public life through alternative routes such as charities and women's organizations.

## Overcoming the Odds

Many of the political inroads women have made are due to gender quotas designed to seat more women in legislative bodies, from national parliaments to local village councils. About 50 countries have established such quotas — the Nordic countries were the earliest to put these in place — and 30 to 40 more have voluntary quotas, according to the International Parliamentary Union. In addition to quotas, women need to be trained to run for and hold office. Recruitment systems for



A young woman votes in Riga, Latvia.

legislative and executive positions must be more transparent.

Rwanda and South Africa saw historic jumps in the proportion of women in parliament after their national constitutions were rewritten with quotas in place for women's representation. In other countries, such as Kyrgyzstan in 2007, 30-percent quotas have been adopted as part of election reform. In Kuwait in 2005, the all-male parliament granted women full political rights — a small but significant step in the Arab world. Many other countries have reserved seats for women on local village councils and governing bodies. In India in recent years, some states have



increased the quota for women in these bodies from 30 percent to 50 percent.

### The Power of Measurement

Monitoring women's participation in political life is critical even if the metrics used are imperfect. Women's share of seats in national parliaments is a reliable measure because these bodies are relatively stable over time and the headcount is easily compared among countries. Granted, the percentage of seats or offices held by women reveals nothing about how fully they participate or how much power they wield. Nevertheless, establishing benchmarks for women's progress draws attention to the issue and to ensuring that affirmative action is working. These measures wouldn't be necessary if there was

gender equality, but until that is achieved and quotas are no longer necessary, women must continue to participate actively and fight for their share of representation.

Women in rural El Quiché, Guatemala, display their inked fingers, proof they voted.

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**Lori S. Ashford**, a freelance consultant, has written about global population, health and women's issues for 20 years. Formerly with the Population Reference Bureau, she authored the widely disseminated Women of Our World data sheets and the Population Bulletin "New Population Policies: Advancing Women's Health and Rights," among other publications.

PROFILE

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# Michelle Bachelet

Physician, Military Strategist, Head of State

*By* Karen Calabria



Courage, commitment and circumstance propelled this physician turned politician into becoming the first woman president of Chile. Now she works for international gender equality.

**S**elf-professed agnostic. Divorced mother of three. Amateur folksinger. That's hardly a recipe for political success in a country as devoutly religious and socially conservative as Chile.

But the South American nation's first democratically elected female president, Dr. Michelle Bachelet, has never shied away from contradictions. If anything, she has created her legacy from them.

"We've opened the windows and doors to let ordinary people in, to encourage them to participate," Bachelet told *The New York Times*, reflecting on the fractured aspects of her past that coalesced to win her the Chilean presidency.

She's a political prisoner turned public servant who, as a government minister and Chile's president, worked to establish a stable democracy during the transition from the brutal military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet.

She's a physician — an epidemiologist and pediatrician — with a facility for healing equal to, if not surpassed by, her adeptness as a military strategist. She studied military strategy at the National Academy for Strategic and Policy Studies in Chile and at the Inter-American Defense College in Washington. In her first attempt to gain the highest political office, she emerged from the race as president, the first woman elected president of Chile.

And, at just 59 years of age, Bachelet is nowhere near finished. Recently appointed as the first head of the new United Nations agency U.N. Women, she continues to build her legacy — this time as one of the world's most prominent activists for gender equality.

"In my family, I learned that all people should be equal in opportunities, and that justice was essential, dignity was essential. So it is in my DNA to believe in peoples' rights and to believe we are all different and that it is great because that makes this world more interesting," she said in an interview with Barbara Crossette that appeared in *The Nation*.

Those ideals experienced their first — and most trying — test during the 1973 ouster of then-President Salvador Allende by military strongman Pinochet. Her father, an Air Force general with a prominent position in Allende's government, was taken into military custody for treason. He was tortured, and subsequently died from a heart attack as a result.

Bachelet didn't let this deter her own political participation. Instead, she stepped up her commitment as a member of the Socialist Youth Movement. But her activities were curtailed when both she and her mother were detained at torture centers by the Pinochet regime before they fled the country for Australia in 1975.



President Bachelet speaks with a family affected by the 2010 earthquake and tsunami in Constitución, Chile.

In spite of what she endured in her early years of political engagement, Bachelet made a concerted effort to address inequities in Chilean society. As minister of health, which she became in 2000, under President Ricardo Lagos, she improved access to public health care. In 2002 she was the first woman in Latin America to be appointed defense minister. During her tenure she promoted reconciliation between the military and civilian society, reforming and modernizing the Chilean military.

“Because I was a victim of hate, I’ve consecrated my life to turning hate into understanding, tolerance and, why not say it — love,” she said in her victory speech after the 2006 presidential election.

Although she began her career as a physician, quickly moving up the ladder to become health minister, she couldn’t shake the lasting influence of her father’s military background.

“I noticed that one of the barriers to full democracy was the [lack] of understanding between the military world and

the civilian world. They spoke different languages. I wanted to help with that. I could be a bridge between those two worlds,” she told *The Guardian* of the graduate studies she undertook in military science that led to her eventual appointment as Chile’s first female defense minister in 2002.

Despite all her successes, Bachelet’s been no stranger to criticism. She’s been roundly criticized for her administration’s education policy, the failure of an ambitious public transportation plan and a series

of endless labor disputes. But her approval rating is the highest of any president in Chile's history, topping off at 84 percent when she left office in March 2010.

Yet no amount of success seems to diminish her determination to press forward with the next task. In July 2010,

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed her as the first head of the organization's newly created agency, U.N. Women.

Shortly after her appointment, U.N. Radio aired an interview in which Bachelet did not hesitate to outline some of

the difficulties she faces in her new role. "In many regions of the world, women have a very difficult situation. They don't have the same opportunities as men regarding the most essential human rights; women are discriminated [against], their rights are violated. There are still some places where women are mutilated. And so I am convinced that we need to work very hard to improve their condition, and I know it's ... very challenging work."

And despite the legacy she's already created for herself as one of the world's female heads of state, Bachelet remains as committed to her vision of a better future as the youthful idealist that stood up to the same oppressive regime that had killed her father.

As she told *The New York Times*, "What I am mostly interested in, what I remain committed to, is less dwelling on the past than creating a better future."



A supporter of President Michelle Bachelet holds a newspaper that proclaims "Thank you President" on her last day in office, March 11, 2010. She maintained a high popularity rating to the end of her tenure.

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Karen Calabria is a freelance writer based in New York City.

# Council of Women World Leaders

*By* Laura Liswood

At the Aspen Institute, the Council of Women World Leaders is a forum where women who serve or have served as world leaders confer to develop strategies for gender equality.

**T**rickle-down may be a controversial theory in any debate about the economy, but it can be a powerful approach when the goal is to promote gender equality.

That's the high-minded end game for the Council of Women World Leaders, a top-down juggernaut of female government leaders that is using its influence to increase opportunities for women across the globe. Its mission: to mobilize the highest-level women leaders globally for collective action on issues of critical importance to women.

"Studies have shown that by the time children start school, they already have a deeply imbedded sense of what it means to be male and female in their society," says Kim Campbell, Canada's first female prime minister, in a recent *Newsweek* article. "If these views support traditional gender roles, education will be hard-pressed to supplant them with something more conducive to gender equality. If we want to open up opportunities for women in public life, we have to address the landscape from which

people derive their ideas of the way the world works."

The council was conceived as one way to move that goal along. Established in 1997, it is not just another venue for high-profile officials to pose on a public stage. These aren't the women's networking groups of the '80s and '90s, but power gatherings with all the prerogatives that come with holding high office. This network of elite women aims to leverage its influence, change attitudes and eliminate hurdles to women's progress. For example, through its Ministerial Initiative, the council provides a vehicle for a collective female voice on nettlesome global issues, shaping the agendas for multilateral policymaking gatherings to focus squarely on gender aspects.

The Ministerial Initiative on the Environment was created to address the critical need to foster sustainable development policies. The council noted in 2009 that women have primary responsibility for raising children and for securing sufficient resources for their families' nutrition and health. So logic



Left: Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was instrumental in founding the Ministerial Initiative of the Council of Women World Leaders. Below: Women leaders pose to mark the Council of World Women Leaders' first summit in May 1998, at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Seated from left: Violeta B. de Chamorro, former president, Nicaragua; Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former president, Iceland; Laura Liswood, executive director. Standing from left: Tansu Çiller, former prime minister, Turkey; Hanna Suchocka, former prime minister, Poland; Kazimiera Prunskienė, former prime minister, Lithuania; the late Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister, Pakistan; Dame Eugenia Charles, former prime minister, Dominica; and Kim Campbell, former prime minister, Canada.



dictates that women's involvement in environmental issues should increase. Given the variety of their daily interactions with the environment, women are the most keenly affected by its degradation. Yet women are severely underrepresented at decisionmaking tables on development and the environment.

Madeleine Albright, the first female U.S. secretary of state, was founding chair of the Ministerial Initiative and an Aspen Institute trustee. To honor her contributions, a series of roundtable discussions bears her name.

The council's Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute Series hosts

global leaders and internationally acclaimed experts from various disciplines, who discuss and debate specific policy issues and suggest future actions for change — with emphasis on the gender dimension of the topic. Security, environmental and social matters are all seen through a gendered lens.

A winter 2010 panel, for example, featured two notable political scientists, Erika Falk of the Annenberg School of Communication and Elisabeth Gidengil of McGill University. They discussed their recent findings on female political candidates, which show it is still typically a slippery climb to the top.

They found that reporters focus substantially more on men's policy

positions than on women's, talk more about women's physical appearance than men's and cover the male candidates' campaigns twice as much.

In 1996, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, Iceland's first democratically elected female head of state, who served from 1980 to 1996, collaborated with this author to convene women heads of government. The Council of Women World Leaders was created in 1997. Finnbogadóttir was the first chairperson. Housed at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government until 2004, the council is now a policy program of the Aspen Institute, a Washington-based international nonprofit organization that fosters enlightened leadership and open-minded dialogue.

**Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** was elected to a second term in 2011. Her strong background in finance led her to various government and nongovernment positions, including finance minister, before she became president.





German Chancellor Angela Merkel (left) and Finnish President Tarja Halonen talk at the Berlin Chancellery.

Tarja Halonen, the president of Finland since 2000, currently serves as chair. Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland (1990-1997) and Campbell, former prime minister of Canada (1993), also have held the position. Democratically elected women presidents and prime ministers are eligible to join the 45-member council by invitation. Today it includes former President Michelle Bachelet of Chile, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and former Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand, among others.

In 1998, the council expanded to include women Cabinet members. The Ministerial Initiative advances democracy, gender equality and good governance

through exchanges at ministerial meetings on global issues such as health, education, environment, finance, economy and development.

The council also fosters emerging leaders through its graduate fellowship programs, which place promising graduate students in the offices of council members, international organizations and ministerial offices around the globe. Through the three branches of the program, Gender and Public Policy, Environmental Policy and Public Health Policy, fellows are provided with an opportunity to observe firsthand the ways in which leadership is manifested at the highest levels. To date, more than 160 fellows have served in 52 offices worldwide. Students from top-tier graduate

schools of public health and environmental studies are placed in relevant ministries of council members and in international organizations.

The council is a unique space for dialogue on the role of women at the highest levels of decisionmaking and for the promotion of women's issues and women in government. It offers a network of resources for high-level women leaders and facilitates a forum for a diverse group of seasoned policymakers to recommend viable solutions to inequities that afflict women today. The council's diversity of perspective reflects the multifaceted challenges faced by women in various parts of the world.

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**Laura Liswood** is secretary-general of the Council of Women World Leaders, which she co-founded with Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former president of Iceland, to provide a global network for such women to share their unique experiences and learn from each other in a cooperative environment. She is a senior adviser for the global investment bank Goldman Sachs.



CHAPTER

# 8



## **INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

The International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde is among the dynamic women who lead the way for women in traditionally male-dominated institutions. Government and nongovernment agencies can promote the achievement of mainstream gender equality.



# INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

*By* Mona Lena Krook

National institutions for the advancement of women have been established in nearly every country around the world. They include offices, commissions, agencies and ministries on the status of women. The first offices of this nature were endorsed early in the 20th century by the League of Nations and the International Alliance of Women, which was formed during the women's suffrage movement. One early example is the Women's Bureau in the United States, created in 1920 as part of the Department of Labor to promote the welfare of female workers by formulating standards and policies to improve their working conditions, efficiency and opportunities for employment. However, most government agencies were established following the United Nations First World Conference on Women in 1975. The initial mandate of these offices was to increase women's participation in education, politics and the economy. Examples of these offices worldwide include the National Women's Service in Chile, the Government Equalities Office in the United Kingdom, the Commission on Gender Equality in South Africa and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development in Malaysia.

In addition to government institutions, several regional and international organizations set up agencies to promote



gender equality. The oldest regional agency of this type is the Inter-American Commission of Women, a specialized unit of the Organization of American States, which was established in 1928 as a forum for generating policy to advance women's civil and political rights in the Western Hemisphere. More recent is the European Institute for Gender Equality, established in 2006 to assist European Union institutions and member states in promoting gender equality through public policy.

In the U.N. system, four different offices deal with issues of gender equality: the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), U.N. Development Fund

Luxembourg's Viviane Reding became a member of the European Parliament in 1999, later a member of the European Commission and currently is European Commission vice president for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship.



for Women (UNIFEM), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI). They exist alongside the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), created by the U.N. Economic and Social Council in 1946, whose annual meetings define and elaborate on U.N. policy on women and gender. In 2010, the U.N. General Assembly voted unanimously to create the U.N. Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (U.N. Women) to merge the efforts of DAW, UNIFEM, INSTRAW and OSAGI to accelerate progress toward the achievement of women's human rights in all areas. This step was justified on the grounds that gender equality is

not only a basic human right, but also spurs economic growth.

### **Equal Rights to Gender Mainstreaming**

The shared concern of these offices, both national and international, is to further gender equality and women's empowerment. Approaches for achieving these goals, however, have evolved over time. Initially, most "mechanisms for advancement" focused on enacting and enforcing policies that ensured equal treatment of men and women, seeking to gain for women the same rights already enjoyed by men. This strategy was later criticized for simply assimilating females to a male standard that may not be appropriate for women and girls. A second approach then

**Iraqi women deputies converse at a session of parliament in Baghdad. Women's presence in government can help empower women generally.**

emerged that recognized that distinct policies for women and men may be required to achieve gender parity.

Dissatisfaction with this strategy led to a third approach, known as “gender mainstreaming,” popularized around the globe through the Beijing Platform for Action. The mainstreaming approach involves evaluating every prospective policy: (1) with a gendered lens, that is, assessing a policy’s different implications for women and men; (2) with the goal of promoting equality between women and men. This differs from prior strategies in seeking to apply a gender perspective across all policy areas, including those where a gender dimension is not readily apparent. Gender mainstreaming is

reflected in the mission of the White House Council for Women and Girls, created by U.S. President Obama in 2009 expressly to ensure that each government agency “takes into account the needs of women and girls in the policies they draft, the programs they create, the legislation they support.”

### Only the Beginning

The widespread presence of women’s policy mechanisms belies important variations in the strength and status of these agencies, whose resources are often vulnerable to changes in government and donor funding priorities. These offices may diverge greatly in terms of their budgets

Youth clubs can help young women gain skills. Rabeeta Chaudhary is president of her village youth club in Sutaiya, Nepal, which organizes projects and helps mediate disputes.





and staff, the length of their mandate, their closeness to the executive, the backgrounds of their agency heads, and their policy priorities. In some countries, for example, agencies have ministerial rank, while in others they are housed in the office of the president or under the auspices of another ministry, such as justice or social development. Few such mechanisms have the power to negotiate their own budgets, and many have only a handful of staff members. In addition, their existence and status may depend closely upon the will of the president or prime minister, who may fundamentally reorganize their mandate, for example, by adding a focus on family and children or by combining the unit with other offices focused on race, disability and sexual orientation. An ongoing concern is whether these agencies are endowed with sufficient power

and resources to truly advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The articles in this chapter consider ways in which some women are working through institutions to give women more voice through legislation and government and nongovernment advocacy.

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**Mona Lena Krook** is assistant professor of political science and women, gender and sexuality studies at Washington University in St. Louis. She is the author of *Quotas for Women in Politics* (2009) and co-editor of *Women, Gender, and Politics: A Reader* (2010).

**United Nations agencies advance women by employing them in many capacities. This woman in Hera, East Timor, was a United Nations peacekeeper during that country's transition to independence in 2000.**

PROFILE

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# Kateryna Levchenko

## Challenging Patriarchal Politics

*By* Yevhen Hlibovytsky and Oksana Forostyna

A close-up portrait of Kateryna Levchenko, a woman with short, dark, wavy hair. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a dark purple or maroon textured sweater over a black turtleneck. A blue lanyard is visible around her neck, and a silver chain necklace is partially visible. The background is out of focus, showing a wooden wall and a blue banner with white text, including the letters 'e' and 'rains'.

Kateryna Levchenko became a feminist early in her career as an academic and has spent her life challenging traditional patriarchal stereotypes of women from within government and through nongovernmental organizations.

Ukrainian human rights advocate Kateryna Levchenko looks much too inspired for a person who just lost a lawsuit. “We’re done here. Now it is time to appeal to international community!” Levchenko sued Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov over his March 2010 statement that “conducting reforms is not women’s business,” which he made when asked why there are no female ministers in his Cabinet. All of the judicial institutions where Levchenko filed a case against him found that Azarov was free to express his views, and did not fault him for the discriminatory nature of his words. Levchenko wants to challenge this acceptance of a disparaging patriarchal attitude. It is so common that during the 2009 election campaign Viktor Yanukovich, soon to be elected president of Ukraine, publicly stated that his rival, Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, would do better in the kitchen. Levchenko does not take such words lightly, and has devoted her career to safeguarding human and women’s rights.

Despite ingrained traditional attitudes about women’s place, Ukraine does offer women opportunities for achievement. According to the WomanStats Database (<http://www.womanstats.org>), Ukraine is among those countries where the laws are consistent with the recommendations of the U.N. Convention

on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, but enforcement can be inconsistent. The government may or may not support women’s advancement, but women can succeed in Ukraine’s businesses, government agencies, science and academia. Yet few women participate in power politics. Women make up only seven percent of the Ukrainian Parliament — 34 out of 441 members of parliament as of February 2010 — and none hold significant positions in the current government. Kateryna Levchenko thinks the reason for this is the nature of power in Ukraine, which is rough-and-tumble and requires often ruthless toughness: “That’s why there are a lot of women in

the middle and junior positions in public administration and so few are on top.”

Levchenko had her first real experience of gender discrimination at the age of 26, as a young, successful university lecturer and mother-to-be. She was pregnant for the first time and was obliged to register in a state clinic. After waiting for three hours at the clinic, she tried to change her appointment time to accommodate her teaching schedule, but the doctor yelled at her: “What lectures? No one cares, lady, you’re pregnant here, not a professor!” Two decades later she recalls, “Then I understood how discrimination works,” adding that a man would not have received such treatment.



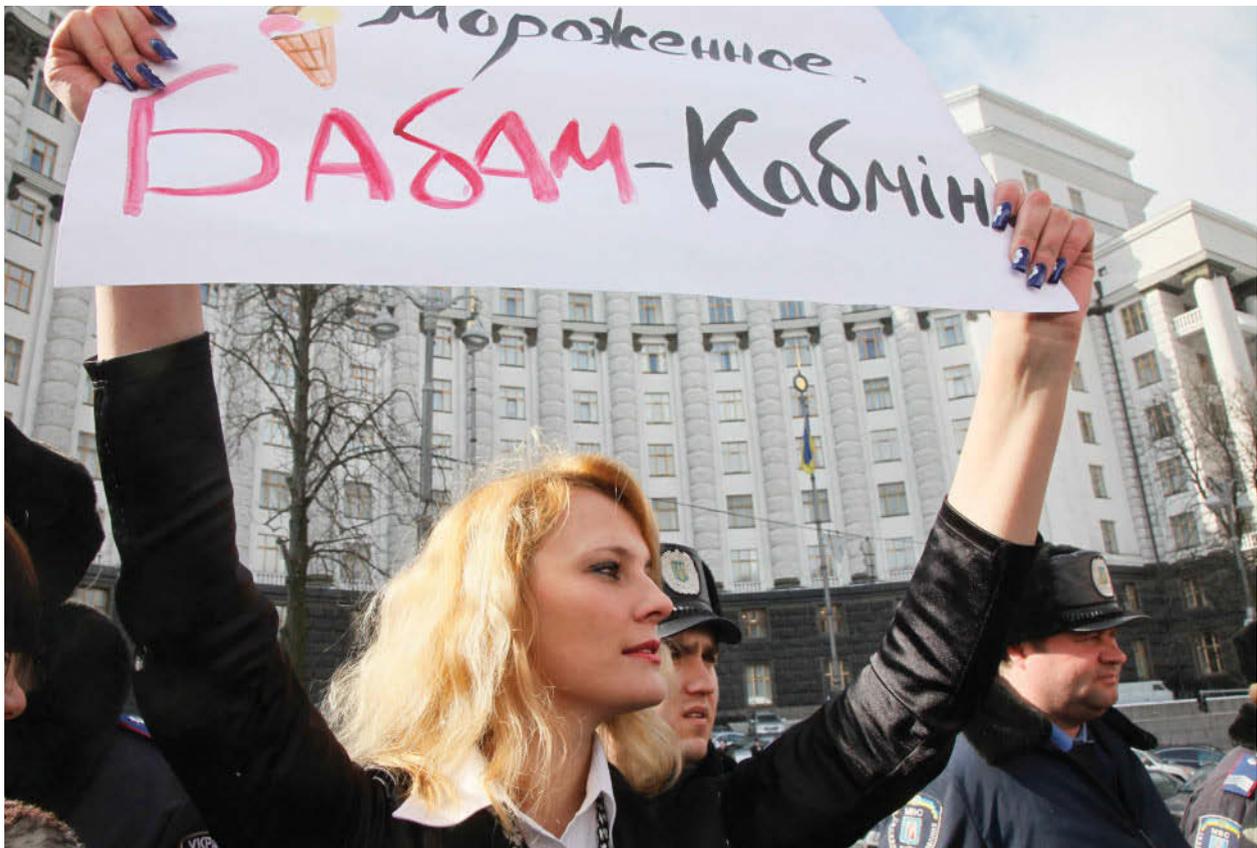
Former Ukrainian prime minister and opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko has confronted challenges and political controversy. She was a chief figure in the 2004 “Orange Revolution” protests against fraudulent elections. Convicted of “abuse of power” in 2011 after the new government filed criminal cases against her, she is serving a seven-year prison sentence. Her trial and conviction are widely seen as politically motivated, prompting calls for her release.

Levchenko's path to feminism and human rights is typical for the first generation of Ukrainian feminists, who became public persons in the mid-1990s. She describes her family as "democratic, egalitarian." Her parents were both academics in Kharkiv, which is one of the major scientific and educational centers of Ukraine and the former Soviet Union. She says she never faced gender problems in her early years in the department of philosophy and scientific communism at the Kharkiv Institute of Railway Engineering. Levchenko recalls: "Those were the times we became familiar

with modern Western philosophy [after decades of intellectual isolation], and people were very open-minded." Like many of her peers in the academic community, Levchenko turned to feminism after reading works by Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva and Betty Friedan. Levchenko explains this post-Soviet trend as natural: "Self-identification is a rather complicated process. That's why academic circles were the first to embrace feminist and human rights ideas." She launched the course "Introduction to Gender Theory" in 1996, one of the first academic courses of this sort in

Ukraine. Very soon Levchenko would use this successful experience in her work with state institutions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). She began working for NGOs, first in Kharkiv, then in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, coordinating programs for prevention of human trafficking.

In 2004 Levchenko was invited to become adviser on human rights and gender issues to the interior minister of Ukraine. It was a challenging time, both inside and outside the ministry. Her new government colleagues hardly understood the concept of gender and were skeptical



An activist from the Ukrainian women's organization FEMEN in Kyiv protests the all-male government formed in 2010. The posters read "Give a portfolio!"

about human rights, while many activists were surprised at her decision to be a part of law enforcement. In the fall of 2004 an aroused civil society took to the streets to confront the Ukrainian government. The protest lasted two months and became the “Orange Revolution,” so named for the color adopted by the political opposition. Levchenko had to navigate between international organizations and the ministry, which was accused of persecuting political opponents.

Levchenko says the real work began in spring 2005 when Yuriy Lutsenko, who was known for coordinating street protests before the revolution, took the position of interior minister. Levchenko says she held the first meeting with police patrolwomen, top-level ministry investigators and other female ministry staff. “Few knew that we had about 17 percent women in 2005, and 19 percent in 2009. Some of them administrated organized crime divisions and even served in ‘Cobra’ [a special Ukrainian police unit],” Levchenko says.

Human rights activist Taras Hataliak was in prison when Levchenko began her work at the Interior Ministry. Released just few weeks before the Orange Revolution, Hataliak began working with Levchenko. Taras Hataliak was the assistant interior minister in Lviv region (Western Ukraine) where he tracked abuses of human rights in police departments and

prisons. “Levchenko was the policymaker and the messenger of human rights activists inside the ministry. She knew what the grass-roots organizations knew, and made sure that the agenda of civil society soon became part of the minister’s agenda,” he recalls. Hataliak also gives her credit for launching the human rights monitoring system in police departments. Mobile groups for preventing human rights abuses were deployed. Public councils on human rights were established in every region. Legislation to protect human rights was adopted. In 2008 a special department to monitor human rights in law enforcement agencies was created. Levchenko is proud that human rights activists made up 40 percent of the ministry staff. The rest were retired policemen who knew the system and supported human rights reforms.

However, good intentions to reform the police always depend on the political situation in the country. As the governments changed, policies changed. Levchenko served in the Interior Ministry twice: from September 2004 to May 2006, and from January 2008 to April 2010. The department to monitor human rights was dissolved by the Yanukovych government. The former members of the team continue to work on human rights issues through NGOs such as La Strada — Ukraine, which Levchenko heads.

La Strada is a multinational

NGO that helps primarily female victims of trafficking and domestic violence in Central and Eastern Europe. Levchenko says that people from all social groups ask La Strada for help. Calls come mostly from women, but men also request assistance. She expects La Strada’s work to increase as people become better informed about trafficking in persons and as Ukraine’s social services continue to improve.

Kateryna Levchenko’s lawsuit over Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov’s disparagement of women was one more strategy in her campaign to bring women into the conversation, equal in status with men. She continues her efforts to reform law enforcement and human rights abuses in whatever way she can, through institutions within and outside of the government.

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**Yevhen Hlibovytsky** is managing partner of pro.mova, a strategic communications consultancy based in Kyiv, Ukraine. Formerly a journalist, he was one of the leaders of the journalist resistance movement against censorship in Ukraine.

**Oksana Forostyna** is an investigative journalist based in Lviv, Ukraine. She is known for her stories on corruption, gender issues and human rights in Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic and other transition countries.

# Women's Caucus Boosts Uruguayan Democracy

*By* Eric Green

Female legislators in Uruguay set aside party differences to promote gender equality in parliament and in society. The bipartisan Uruguayan Women's Caucus is making a difference for women in that country, but legislators agree that more must be done to ensure gender parity.

**I**t remains a work in progress, but increased participation by Uruguayan women in their country's political life is expanding democracy in the South American nation. Reflecting that progress, female legislators in Uruguay's two houses of parliament united across political party lines by forming a Bicameral Women's Caucus that promotes gender equality and a stronger feminine voice in public policy decisions. The caucus was created in 2000 through the initiative of three lawmakers in the Uruguayan parliament who belonged to different political parties.

Uruguayan senator and caucus member Susana Dalmás said in an interview that even if they might differ on certain national issues, the group has reached consensus on legislation pivotal to women's well-being, such as prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace and giving women access to a retirement pension.

The caucus' biggest obstacle, said Dalmás, is that it has "no place in parliament institutionally." This means, she said, that the caucus is not formally

recognized as an official body of the Uruguayan legislature. The caucus, Dalmás said, represents "the will" of women members of parliament (MPs) "to come together to try to agree on certain matters" that they believe should be considered in the legislature.

## **Gaining Recognition in Parliament Through Unity**

One of the caucus' first actions in 2000 was to create the Special Commission on Gender and Equity. The commission's president, Uruguayan Representative Daniela Payssé, said at an April 2011 forum at the Organization of American States in Washington that female legislators in Uruguay formed their caucus because of a critical need to give women's issues a higher profile in parliament.

Payssé said at the forum on "Women's Leadership for a Citizens' Democracy" that Uruguayan women legislators face the challenge of balancing their desire to address gender equality with the need to confront issues not specifically related to women's advancement.

Another caucus member, Senator Monica Xavier, said in an interview with a United Nations-backed website called “iKNOW Politics” that the caucus emphasizes “the things that unite us.” Xavier said “when citizens see that we can rise above ideological differences ... and work on other issues on which we agree, then we have strength.”

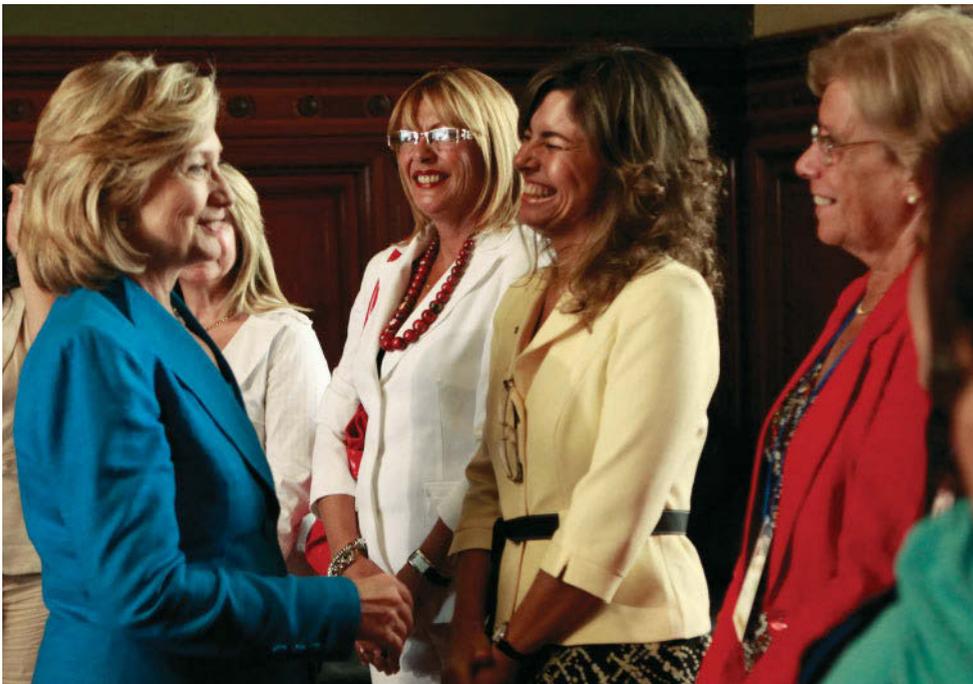
Many men, said Xavier, do not “need to be convinced” about promoting gender equality and electing women lawmakers. “They understand very clearly that we women don’t want involvement for the sake of involvement, but because democracies are stronger when women” are included in the political process.

### **Uruguayan Women Show Strength in Numbers**

The numbers show that women have slowly gained better political representation in Uruguay since the mid-1980s, when no female lawmakers were in the country’s legislature, formally known as the General Assembly. For its 2010-2015 term, 19 female MPs are in the 130-seat



Daniela Payssé is president of the Special Commission for Gender and Equity, Uruguay.



Above: Participants enjoy a parade marking International Women's Day in Montevideo, Uruguay. Left: U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton meets with Uruguayan women legislators in Montevideo, Uruguay in 2010.

parliament, which is composed of the Chamber of Senators and the Chamber of Deputies. The Geneva, Switzerland-based Inter-Parliamentary Union, the international organization of parliaments, ranked Uruguay 73rd of 141 countries (as of March 31, 2011) in the percentage of women in national legislatures.

In an interview with iKNOW Politics, former Uruguayan representative Carmen Beramendi cited more positive developments for Uruguay's women. At the start of former Uruguayan President Tabaré Vázquez's administration in 2005, she said, four out of 13 of his government's ministers were women, which was "unprecedented" in that he placed women ministers in "positions that were usually not given to us." Those positions included women heading the defense and interior ministries, the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Public Health.

"This had a double effect," said Beramendi, who served in parliament from 1990 to 1995. "First, we women had a much greater presence in the public sphere. Second, holding these kinds of offices largely helped prove that women can effectively hold these positions in society."

### **Efforts of Uruguayan Women Leaders Lauded**

The United States has made advancing women a pillar of its

foreign policy. In March 2011, a State Department international exchange program called "Women's Leadership: The Next Hundred Years" brought Adriana Lourdes Abraham Pérez from Uruguay and other women leaders from 92 countries to the United States.

Abraham Pérez, director of a nonprofit association in Uruguay called the Center for the Promotion of Human Dignity (known by the Spanish acronym CEPRODIH) that helps disadvantaged women, children and elders, said in an email exchange that in the last 20 years, female participation in Uruguayan political life has undergone a "positive evolution, although much more needs to be done."

Abraham Pérez said one of the most significant political events in her country was the 2010 election of Ana Olivera as the first female mayor of Uruguay's capital of Montevideo. Other women had been elected mayor across the country, but not, until then, in the capital. Abraham Pérez said Uruguayan women still face numerous social and economic injustices, such as gaining access to credit and increasing domestic violence, which she pointed out was also a problem in many other countries besides Uruguay.

The U.S. Embassy in Montevideo hosted more than 15 women leaders of Uruguay to honor International Women's Day in March 2011. Speakers

included Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female U.S. Supreme Court justice (now retired), who is a leader in promoting global women's issues.

Also speaking was U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay David Nelson, who said the United States is "committed to the empowerment of women not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is the smart thing to do. And when women make progress, countries make progress. Everywhere, but especially here in Uruguay, you are making a difference and changing the world for the better."

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**Eric Green** is a freelance writer based in Washington. He has covered international issues for the U.S. State Department and the United States Information Agency, and has been a Senate press aide and a newspaper reporter for the *Washington Post* and other newspapers.





CHAPTER

# 9



## HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Some countries still fail to accord human rights to women. Afghan women are among those to whom nongovernmental organizations offer assistance because of widespread abuse.

# HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

*By* Robin N. Haarr

**H**uman rights and fundamental freedoms should be birthrights, but across the globe some countries fail to accord human rights to women. Moreover, women are often victims of human rights abuses. Women's human rights are abused when they cannot participate in decisions that affect their lives and are denied political participation and fair representation, when they are prevented from going to school or receiving health care, when they face discrimination in employment, when they are denied equal rights to own land and property, when they suffer from violence within their homes and when they are subjected to harmful traditional practices such as genital mutilation and honor killings.

Recognition of women's rights began in some countries as they evolved from feudal into more representative forms of government. In the United States, awareness of women's rights came with the ideals of the American Revolution. Strong and intelligent women such as Abigail Adams, wife of the second U.S. president, John Adams, demanded fair and equal treatment, and warned presciently, "If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation." She also advocated equal



access to education for girls, writing to her husband, who then represented the new American republic in Paris: "I regret the trifling narrow contracted education of the females of my own country." Women's suffrage movements began in the United States and Great Britain in the mid-19th century and in a few European countries in the early 20th century.

According to human rights organizations, Afghan women are often subjected to violence and institutionalized discrimination.



Women’s human rights only emerged as a global movement during the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), when women from many different geographic, cultural, religious, racial and class backgrounds came together and organized to improve the status of women. It was during this decade that the United Nations sponsored several women’s conferences — Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985 — to evaluate the status of women and to formulate strategies for women’s advancement.

### **An International Women’s Bill of Rights**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a key international agreement on women’s human rights, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. CEDAW is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Its preamble and 30 articles aim to eliminate gender discrimination and promote gender equality. The convention defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex” that impedes women’s “human rights and fundamental

Thousands of women, such as these in Hyderabad, Pakistan, held nationwide rallies to demand equal rights and an end to discriminatory laws on International Women’s Day.



freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.” It sets an agenda for national action to end such discrimination, requiring all parties to the convention to take “all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women” and guarantee their fundamental freedoms “on a basis of equality with men.”

As of 2009, 186 United Nations member states had ratified CEDAW. The Obama administration strongly supports this treaty and is committed to U.S. ratification. State parties to CEDAW agree to incorporate principles of gender equality into their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation; to adopt

appropriate legislation and other measures that prohibit discrimination against women; and to establish legal protections of their rights on an equal basis with men.

Women’s human rights apply to both the “public” and “private” spheres of women’s lives. For many governments, however, addressing women’s rights in the “private” sphere is challenging because the private sphere is often thought to be beyond the purview of the state, exempt from governmental scrutiny and intervention (UNIFEM [now UN Women], *About the Convention*). As a result, in many countries, discrimination and violence against women and girls that occur in the family and under the guise of religious and cultural traditions and

A mural near Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, commemorates hundreds of women who were murdered and left in the desert near that city.

practices continue to remain hidden in the private sphere, where perpetrators of such human rights abuses typically enjoy impunity for their actions.

## Women's Rights as Human Rights

Since the 1980s, women around the world have come together in networks and coalitions to raise awareness about problems of discrimination, inequality and violence. They have used a human rights framework to fight for women's rights in the family, social, economic and political arenas. An important outcome of the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These documents embody the international community's commitment to advance and empower women and remove obstacles in the public and private spheres that have historically limited women's full participation. The Platform for Action sets forth three strategic objectives related to the human rights of women: to promote and protect women's human rights through the full implementation of all human rights instruments (especially CEDAW), to ensure equality and nondiscrimination under the law and in practice, and to achieve legal literacy. Governments bear the main responsibility, but persons, organizations and enterprises are important in taking concrete actions to improve women's lives.

Then-U.S. first lady Hillary Clinton famously declared at the 1995 Beijing conference that "human rights are women's rights," adding, "Women must enjoy the right to participate fully in the social and political lives of their countries if we want freedom and democracy to thrive and endure."

CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action signaled the successful mainstreaming of women's rights as human rights. Although the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are not legally binding, they do carry ethical and political weight and can be used to pursue local, regional and national efforts to address women's human rights. CEDAW is a treaty that is binding on its parties.

The principles and practices related to women's human rights are continuously evolving. The large body of international covenants, agreements and commitments to women's human rights developed over the past several decades provides women with an alternative vision and vocabulary to confront violations to their human rights. Such guidelines are important tools for political activism and a framework for developing concrete strategies for change.

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**Robin N. Haarr** is a professor of criminal justice at Eastern Kentucky University whose research focuses on violence against women and children and human trafficking, nationally and internationally. She does research and policy work for the United Nations and U.S. embassies, and has received several awards for her work, including induction into the Wall of Fame at Michigan State University's School of Criminal Justice, and the CoraMae Richey Mann "Inconvenient Woman of the Year" Award from the American Society of Criminology, Division on Women and Crime.

PROFILE

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# Ex-Child “Slave” Sina Vann Helps Others Escape the Darkness

*By* Eric Green



Sina Vann, a child sex slave for two years in Cambodia, now uses her traumatic past to save other young women and girls entrapped in the same situation. Vann leads the Voices for Change program for a Cambodian foundation that offers compassion, empathy and a chance for rehabilitation into society for those victimized by sexual predators.

**I**t would be understandable if Sina Vann tried to forget her real-life nightmare: being enslaved as a 13-year-old and forced into prostitution for two years in Cambodia. Girls in Vann's former predicament, trapped as sex slaves, never know the difference between night and day. They are imprisoned in underground cages until brought into a room where they are forced to have sex with one customer after another.

Though her childhood innocence was stolen from her, Vann, now 25, returns often to the scene of the crime to save other girls dehumanized by the sex trade industry. The girls can be as young as 4 years old.

"When I go to the brothels, I always say things to the girls to motivate them," says Vann. "I share my personal background of how I lived in a brothel too. I

tell them you're not alone, there are many other victims and survivors who are living in rehabilitation centers and that there are people who care and are always thinking about you. We offer them warmth and love."

As she speaks in a phone interview from Cambodia, the English language Vann has been learning comes across softly but in determined and confident tones. She describes how her life has turned around since she was ensnared for two years as a sex slave.

Vann was rescued during a 1998 raid organized by anti-sex slavery activist Somaly Mam. Mam is also a sex slave survivor who documented her experience in an autobiography, *The Road to Lost Innocence*. The nongovernmental foundation she created in 1996, called AFESIP Cambodia (Acting for



Sina Vann was held captive and tortured in this now abandoned dungeon.

Women in Distressing Situations), has rescued more than 6,000 young women and girls since its founding. It runs large shelters in Southeast Asia for the girls' rehabilitation and return to normal lives.

Vann now leads Somaly Mam's "Voices for Change" program, where she speaks out for sex slaves unable to speak for themselves. "We work directly with the victims to build warm relationships and listen to their experiences," she says.

At the brothels, Vann educates young women about the dangers of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases when they are forced to have unprotected sex with clients. Many women are unaware they can die from HIV/AIDS, Vann says, "so I tell them the importance of the clients using condoms."

Vann finds it difficult to explain how she overcame the trauma of being trapped in the prostitution industry. But it's easier for her to say where her motivation to help others comes from: "Somaly Mam and the AFESIP staff did so much to change me while I lived at the [organization's] rehabilitation center. And I get much motivation from the young residents who live there. These girls are so lovely — their smiling faces make me feel strong to be able to help them."

Somaly Mam says she has seen a remarkable positive transformation in Vann since



Top: Somaly Mam, former Cambodian sex slave and founder of a rescue organization, works at a dressmaker's shop that employs rescued girls. Above: Young women pose in a hair-styling salon. Training in such income-generating skills as sewing and hair styling are part of rescued girls' rehabilitation.

Mam helped police authorities rescue the Vietnamese native, then 14, from the brothels. “Sina has changed completely since the first time I met her at the rehabilitation center,” says Mam. “She was so broken. She didn’t speak to me and was destructive, trying to break everything in the center. I put my hand in hers and didn’t say a word, but let her know I understood what she was feeling.”

Now the mentee motivates the mentor. “Sina is so strong and brave. I admire her. She inspires me every day. She gives her heart to all the other” victims at the center, Mam says.

She adds that the former victims learn how to become independent: “The girls go to school and do homework” and gain job skills that include how to sew and style hair. “For me, I enjoy seeing the girls be happy again. They’re like my family.”

Mam’s foundation said Vann’s story is instructive in the global fight against sex slavery — for people unaware that sex slavery is happening, for those who want to end it, for women still trapped in brothels and for “the survivors who are emerging from the darkness and need inspiration to rebuild their lives.”

Vann says she has learned the laws on human trafficking and has become familiar with basic counseling and psychology as part of her training with AFESIP. She also does the grueling and sometimes

dangerous groundwork of documenting abuses and preparing complaints for police investigative and legal teams to issue arrest warrants to brothel operators. She recalls a frightening and “rewarding” experience of rescuing a sex slave victim who was only 4 years old that involved a violent confrontation with brothel owners to free the child from a cage.

Vann won the 2009 Frederick Douglass \$10,000 prize, which is awarded by the Washington-based nongovernmental organization Free the Slaves. It is presented to those who have survived a form of slavery and help others find purpose in their lives. The award, named for a U.S. statesman who escaped from bondage in 1838 to become a leader in the movement to abolish slavery, emphasizes that many survivors of modern-day slavery go on to help others to freedom.

Vann says the award is important “for all the victims and survivors” of sex slavery who live around the world. She uses the award to explain that “we are strong to fight” the sex predators, she says.

Free the Slaves maintains that “widespread impoverishment of people and their resulting vulnerability and government corruption” that does not protect women from the “violence of enslavement” drive 21st-century slavery. The group says slavery occurs “when one person

completely controls another person, using violence to maintain that control, exploits them economically, pays them nothing and they cannot walk away.”

Vann says young sex slaves include those “trafficked by their own families for money,” while the traffickers are “thinking of their own profits and not the happiness of others.”

Though she suffered an unspeakable childhood horror, Vann has not allowed it to destroy her. “I am very happy because the world is concerned” about fighting the sex slave industry. Former sex slaves, she says, are being “given a chance to return to society with honor and dignity.”

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**Eric Green** is a freelance writer based in Washington. He has covered international issues for the U.S. State Department and the United States Information Agency and has been a Senate press aide and a newspaper reporter for the *Washington Post* and other newspapers.

# Making Cities Safe for Women

*By* Maria Jain and Suhgenie Kim

Women and girls are the keys to building safer cities. So say members of a unique organization that gives women tools to protect themselves and function effectively in urban environments.

**W**omen in Cities International (WICI) is a groundbreaking program that promotes women's safety in four of the world's major cities. Responding to the challenges of urbanization, the organization works with women and girls to fulfill their rights to the city, defined as the right to live, move around and work.

"A girl is waiting for the bus, but it arrives full and doesn't even stop. A man invites her for a coffee and she says no. He tells her that it doesn't matter; she has to go with him anyway. The girl threatens to call the police but the man drags her away and rapes her." This is the safety concern expressed by a 13-year-old girl from Rosario, Argentina.

Across the world's cities, women and girls too often feel unsafe. Targeted simply because they are women, they are exposed to daily harassment and sexual violence in public spaces. But a growing network of organizations has successfully brought safety for women in urban environments around the world.

In 2009, the Montreal-based nonprofit organization Women in Cities International launched the Gender Inclusive Cities Programme (GICP), an innovative program designed to engage women and girls in creating safer cities. The program is implemented by partner organizations in four cities: Jagori in New Delhi, India; the International Centre and Network for Information on Crime — Tanzania, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; CISCSA (Centro de Intercambio y Servicios Cono Sur Argentina) — the Women and Habitat Network in Rosario, Argentina; and the Information Centre of the Independent Women's Forum in Petrozavodsk, Russia. The program targets circumstances that make women and girls vulnerable to urban violence and engages local communities in making public spaces safer.

GICP is supported by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, a leading global grant-maker exclusively dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls. With a strong track record of nurturing innovation



Above: Cleaning up water sources and improving sanitation in areas such as this slum in New Delhi, India, make cities safer. Left: Women and girls conduct a “safety audit” walk to identify dangerous areas in their Rosario, Argentina, neighborhood.



and catalyzing change, the U.N. Trust Fund provides the project with vital leverage to make a significant contribution to women's rights in cities.

"In all the cities, women face fear. They are fearful of sexual harassment, of sexual assault. Across the cities, women say they try to avoid getting out at night. The moment it becomes dark, the city becomes a more hostile place for women. Women say using public transport is a problem," states Dr. Kalpana Viswanath, project coordinator. "This clearly indicates that women are not equal citizens of the city, they are not able to equally access what the city can offer."



**Top:** Women identified the lack of pavement as severely restricting their mobility and adding to their fear of violence in this area of New Delhi.  
**Above:** Young women in Petrozavodsk, Russia, take notes about an unsafe area in their community.



The director of WICI's partner organization in Tanzania asks a woman about her daily life in Dar es Salaam.

WICI and its partners engage women and girls in participatory research activities such as street surveys, neighborhood safety audits and group discussions to gather their knowledge on key safety concerns in their communities. Poor street lighting, broken pavements and lack of signage, along with the presence of drug dealers and youth gangs, are some of the main reasons women feel afraid outside their homes. Using the critical input from women and girls, WICI and its partners develop intervention plans and engage with governments and other organizations to build more gender-inclusive urban spaces.

While reforming physical infrastructure is central to gender-equitable urban development, transforming attitudes toward women in society is equally important. A foundation for a truly safe city for all depends

on positive changes in public perception of gender norms and behaviors among individuals, families and communities.

Halfway through the three-year project, WICI has already made significant progress. In Petrozavodsk, Russia, a landmark agreement with local police chiefs will develop data on crimes based on information from women and girls. The creation of such quantitative data is unprecedented in Russia and makes women's safety concerns visible to policymakers.

Local officials in a low-income community in Dar es Salaam have begun a community policing intervention. Neighborhood watch groups monitor the area and work with the police to address security concerns. As a result, residents report improved safety in public areas. Muggings have decreased from a minimum of 10 per day to three per week.

In the words of one woman from the community, "I feel confident when I walk the streets. I know for sure that I have right to walk without feeling afraid and I appreciate myself more and can talk about issues on our safety in public meetings."

In New Delhi, the Indian lead of GICP was invited by the city's Municipal Corporation to provide inputs into a road redesign project. This is the first time that women's safety concerns are included in urban planning in the country.

The secretary of community security for Santa Fe Province in Rosario has committed to enhancing women's inclusion in urban space development in the target locality of the city. For the girl at the bus stop, such commitment promises to create a city where she can wait without fear in a well-illuminated area among male passengers who respect her right to move around the city.

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**Maria Jain and Suhgenie Kim** are program analysts at the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women in New York. They work closely with the fund's grantees, who develop and implement approaches that protect women's rights worldwide.





CHAPTER

# 10



## WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

Long excluded from serious news reportage, women today have risen to the top in media organizations worldwide. Young Navajo Indian filmmaker Camille Manybeads Tso draws inspiration from her ancestor, a warrior named Yellow Woman.

# WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

By Carolyn M. Byerly

Women brought a gendered analysis of the mass media to the global stage in the 1970s when a multipart critique was first presented at the 1976 Mexico City conference, which opened the U.N. Decade for Women. Much of the substance of that critique remains relevant today. But women's fight for equal representation in the media began much earlier.

## History of Exclusion and Stereotypes

Women's exclusion from the serious news of the day was raised as early as the 18th century by women suffragists and women's rights activists in Europe and North America. The early suffrage leaders needed the attention of the news media to carry their ideas and activities to wider publics, but male-run newspapers and magazines largely ignored the women activists. The news outlets that did cover women frequently trivialized their goals. Women who departed from the social norms of passivity and deference to male authority, and the traditional roles of wife and mother, risked being characterized as inappropriate, insane or misfits. If they demanded equality with men, the media depicted them either as curiosities or as loud, militant and aggressive. Such characterizations would



continue into the early days of modern feminism (Epstein, 1978).

Not only were women's issues and leaders excluded from the media, but bias against women was practiced in reporting women's issues and leaders. Such treatment inspired women in many countries to establish their own magazines, newspapers and book publishing houses during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The post-Civil War *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* had as its aim to make Victoria Woodhull the first woman president, while the *Lily* had a broad women's rights agenda, and the *Una* championed the rights of immigrant and poor women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan

Left to right: Adela Navarro Bello (Mexico), Parisa Hafezi (Iran), Chiranuch Premchaiporn (Thailand) and Kate Adie (U.K.) — with Liza Gross, IWMF Executive Director — received the International Women's Media Foundation Courage in Journalism Award in October 2011.



Photojournalist Dickey Chapelle covered World War II, documenting such bloody battles as Iwo Jima and Okinawa. She was killed in Vietnam in 1965, the first American woman to be killed covering a war. Chapelle was among a handful of pioneering female war correspondents such as Martha Gellhorn, Margaret Bourke-White, Janet Flanner and Marguerite Higgins.

B. Anthony's short-lived but important newspaper the *Revolution* addressed a spectrum of issues related to women's discrimination, including low wages of working women and the right to vote.

### A New Era of Women's Rights

By the late 20th century, women across the globe focused on enacting political and legal reforms to extend women's equality and access to social institutions and to ensure protection of their rights. It was a new era for women's rights. Many women became politicized during independence

movements, as countries broke from colonial powers. The legacy of that activism carried over into women's media like *Ms.* magazine, founded by U.S. feminists in the early 1970s; *Manushi*, an Indian feminist journal founded in the mid-1970s; and *Isis International Bulletin*, published first in Rome, then later in Manila.

Some feminist leaders were motivated by the enduring problems of exclusion and misogynistic representation in mainstream media to establish their own publishing houses, today numbering many dozens (see [www.wifp.org/DWM/publishers.html](http://www.wifp.org/DWM/publishers.html)). Women's organizations like

the South African group Gender Links have assumed dual missions of establishing their own journals, like *Gender and Media Diversity Journal*, as well as undertaking training for journalists in order to address persistent patriarchal messages in news, advertising, films and television programs (Gender Links, [www.genderlinks.org.za/page/publications](http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/publications)).

Another modern media concern was women's lack of access to media professions. Women were severely underrepresented in newsrooms, television and radio stations, film production and ownership of media outlets. More women on the inside, it was argued, would help resolve many of women's other problems with the media. Women such as Ann S. Moore (Time Inc.), profiled in this chapter, acknowledge the importance of women in their media operations.

Underrepresentation in news production arose through the U.N. Decade for Women (1976-1985), with leaders pushing the United Nations to fund women's news and feature services in the 1970s and 1980s to increase global news flow from progressive women's perspectives. They also gained funding for research on women and media and generated their own research. Two examples are the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists and the World Association of Christian Communicators (WACC). The latter of these is among advocacy groups that sponsor research aimed at enabling strategy-building for women's equality in the media. WACC's (Canada) periodic study *Who Makes the News?* focuses on women's representation in news worldwide, while the International Women's Media Foundation (United States)

Radio journalist Firtia Mataniah hosts her program on women and management for Jakarta, Indonesia, radio station KBR68H. The station was launched by post-Suharto activists as a voice of democracy in 1999.





conducts research on women's status in news organizations. IWMF also recognizes women journalists for courage in reporting with an annual "Courage in Journalism" award.

Such groups offer workshops to teach media professionals how to include gender angles in news. Women have made slower progress in communications governance and policymaking, at national and international levels, so these remain important areas for critique and action. Programs such as USAID-funded Women's Edition have given women strong foundations for journalism careers.

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Ukrainian reporter Lesya Alexeyenko holds a copy of her newspaper, *Vilne Slovo*. She received journalism training through a USAID program.

PROFILE

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# Ann Moore

Leveraging the Value of Women

*By* Joanna L. Krotz



Women who have achieved top management positions in media corporations are few. Ann S. Moore rose to the top of one of the world's most influential news organizations, Time Inc., through perseverance, a willingness to take calculated risks and a canny perception of the future of media.

**T**he impressive thing about Ann S. Moore, who ran Time Inc. from 2002 to 2010, is not her global profile as the first woman to head the legendary company that boasts 115 international magazine titles and some 137 million monthly readers. It's not even her down-to-earth, straight-talking style, the friendships with influential policymakers and A-list celebrities or her habitual appearance on every Most Powerful Woman list ever devised. Rather, the impressive thing, as you listen to Moore review her rise to the top, is the out-and-out glee with which she did the job.

### **Revamping Time Inc. for the Digital Age**

It was far from easy. As chair and CEO, Moore arguably led Time Inc. through its greatest trials and transformations — and emerged victorious. She successfully steered the largest magazine publisher in the United States out of its fierce attachment to print and straight into the digital age. She streamlined its multilayered, old-boy centralized structure into more nimble brand clusters, making managers diverse and more accountable. “We were facing a crisis,” she acknowledges today. “It was not easy to completely transform an industry and drag everybody, kicking and screaming, into the 21st century.”

Then again, Moore could draw on deep experience in setting goals and tackling the challenges. A keen observer and an unabashed fan of Time Inc.'s unique role in the media landscape — the company has influence that streams from Main Street to Wall Street and from Pennsylvania Avenue to Hollywood and Vine — Moore enjoyed a career at the company that spanned 32 years. “I know every inch of this business,” she declares, not particularly bragging, but merely stating the facts.

At a meeting just before her departure is officially announced, Moore is comfortably settled into a plump armchair in the spacious, thickly carpeted executive suite on the 34th floor of Rockefeller Center's landmark Time-Life Building. The sweeping views of midtown Manhattan highlight her success. Moore, at 60, looks back with pride and gusto. Clearly, she has thrived on the risks as much as the wins. “I work with really smart people and we produce really amazing products,” she says. “It's easy to stay working somewhere for 32 years when you're not bored.”

Born in Biloxi, Mississippi, the oldest of five kids, Moore spent her formative years on a series of military bases. “My father was in the Air Force until I was in about sixth grade,” she says. “I moved all the time when I was young and I have nothing but fabulous memories of every move.” She credits her dad, who



Ann S. Moore was appointed chairwoman and chief executive of Time Inc. in 2002, becoming its first female executive.

was a pilot, with shaping her attitudes toward work. “I always knew I could do the job of CEO, but it wasn’t my lifelong ambition,” Moore explains. “My father retired from the military and went on to a whole second career in aviation. So I had a model growing up that said, ‘Hey, you don’t have to just do one thing. And you don’t necessarily have to aspire to being the CEO to be successful.’” That outlook served her well as she climbed the ladder. “I always had a lot of confidence,” she says. “You have to not fear failure.”

### **Drawn to Sports and Publishing**

After high school in McLean, Virginia, Moore went on to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and then earned an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1978. While her classmates headed for Wall Street, Moore wasn’t interested — “I always wondered exactly what they do there,” she says, jokingly. Instead, Moore went to Time Inc. “I was a big sports fan and that’s why I joined the company,” she says. “I turned my hobby

of reading *Sports Illustrated* into my career.”

Through the 1980s, after starting at *Sports Illustrated*, Moore put in stints at *Fortune*, *Money* and *Discover*, moving up with every jump. By the early ’90s, back at *Sports Illustrated* as associate publisher, she began to make her mark on the company. Fittingly, Moore earned her claim to fame by tutoring Time Inc. about the value of women.

“I changed the equation at the company because I’m the one who began diversifying into women’s and children’s

magazines,” says Moore. She launched *Sports Illustrated Kids* in 1989. “It was the first kid magazine and we hadn’t launched anything successful since 1974.” At the time, she says, “we thought you couldn’t make money targeting women, so even when I moved to *People* in 1991, we thought it was a dual-audience magazine.”

### **People and InStyle: Women as an Important Market**

Moore was working with then-editor Lanny Jones. The pair transformed *People* into a news-magazine for women, first moving from black and white to color pages. Next, they changed delivery from Monday to Friday. “News is like bread. The fresher it is, the more exciting it is.” Moore also inaugurated *People* special issues, such as its now-famous “Sexiest Man Alive,” “Best Dressed, Worst Dressed” and others. “It was a license to steal,” she laughs, looking back. “Once you determined this is really a woman’s magazine, you could see what you needed to do with *People* to unleash its potential.” Nowadays, as it has been for years, *People* is the company’s most profitable title and, as Moore likes to point out, *People.com* leads in online entertainment news, with 13 million unique visitors monthly.

The rest remains Moore’s groundbreaking history. She launched *InStyle* in 1991, which

is, today, the nation’s largest-circulation fashion and beauty magazine — “ahead of *Vogue*,” says Moore. *InStyle* is Time Inc.’s third-most-profitable title (*Sports Illustrated* is second). *Real Simple* came next, in 2000. “We had a little piece of research that I couldn’t get out of my mind,” says Moore, which said that the average American woman spends 55 minutes a day just looking for things. “Time is the single most precious commodity to American consumers, especially for a woman,” she says. “So that was the whole idea behind *Real Simple*. We would get you organized and you would have an extra hour a day.”

Moore smiles, leaning back in her comfortable chair, and confides her secret to launching successful magazines. “It was such a simple concept, but it solved a problem. That’s where you find holes in the marketplace, and that’s what Time Inc. was particularly good at. We invented most of the categories we publish in.”

What’s in store for Moore as she moves on? She’s not saying. With her 26-year-old son, Brendan, enrolled at Harvard Business School and her husband, Donovan Moore, continuing work as a private wealth manager at Bessemer Trust, her horizon looks wide open, especially considering her dad’s second-act role model.

And what advice would she give young women who’d like to

shadow her dramatic footsteps? True to form, Moore speaks forthrightly: “I think it’s all about self-assessment. Who are you? What are you good at? What do you like to do? Then use that to find a match. Turn your hobby into your occupation. You have to take responsibility for your career. I also say to young women, learn how to fill out your dance card. I’m the chairman of Time Inc. because I filled out my dance card better than anyone else. I’m the chairman because I’ve been here for 32 years and I’ve launched more magazines than [Time Inc. founder] Henry Luce. That’s why I’m in Luce’s office.”

“And I was very patient.”

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# Women's Edition

*By* Deborah Mesce

Funding for women's news and feature services opened the door to journalism careers for many women worldwide in recent decades. The Women's Edition program shows how women may fruitfully collaborate to gain global perspectives on women's issues, and bring that knowledge to their writing.

Around the table sat 12 women journalists from Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe, discussing the status of women in their cultures. The Africans said women in their countries have many babies, often too many to care for adequately. Reporters from India, the Philippines and Peru said families were somewhat smaller in their countries. Then the Romanian journalist surprised them all: "You know, in my country the government pays women to have children," she said, explaining Romania's strategy to reverse its population decline.

This conversation took place at Women's Edition, a program that brings together small groups of veteran women journalists from influential media houses across the developing world to examine and report on a range of issues related to women's health and development. They gain a global perspective on these issues by learning how countries both similar and different from theirs handle the same issues. As a Nepali reporter put

it after several years in the program, "Now I think globally and write locally."

Women's Edition, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, takes a long-term view of working with journalists. Since 1994 when the program began, 62 journalists have participated. There was little turnover in the early years, but later a two-year participation limit was set. During their tenure in the program, the journalists attend weeklong seminars twice a year in locations around the world. Seminars focus on health and development issues. Each journalist takes away new data and research on specific topics, the insights of experts and memorable experiences from field visits that illuminate the issues. Following each seminar, each journalist prepares a special supplement, a series of articles or a broadcast program for her media house on the seminar topic in the context of her country.

The Population Reference Bureau (PRB), a nongovernmental organization in Washington that runs the project, solicits applications from women editors,



Above: Women's Edition journalists attend a session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Left: In India, two Women's Edition journalists photograph a village potter.

reporters and producers every two years. Journalists hear about this from national and international journalism associations, schools and websites. As many as 200 candidates apply. PRB invites around 12 to participate. PRB looks for seasoned journalists who demonstrate a strong interest in women's health and development issues and who have editorial influence in their newsrooms. To maintain geographic diversity, usually just one journalist is selected from a country.

Women's Edition grew from an earlier PRB project, Global Edition, which brought together senior editors from the developing world to focus and write on population and the environment. Similarly, Women's Edition's mission is to strengthen and increase reporting on women's health and development and, in doing so, stimulate discussion on these issues among the public and policymakers in developing countries.

In organizing the seminars, PRB seeks input from the journalists in selecting a topic and then links the topic with a relevant venue. For example, a seminar on trafficking was held in New Delhi, where the journalists visited a brothel in the city's largest red-light district and talked to Nepali sex workers there who had been trafficked years before. For a seminar on violence against women, Women's Edition met in South Africa,



**Top:** Women's Edition reporters meet with then-ambassador of Ecuador Yvonne A-Baki (right) at the Embassy of Ecuador, Washington, D.C.

**Above:** Three Women's Edition journalists accompany an activist doing HIV/AIDS outreach in a Johannesburg, South Africa, market as part of a project to stop violence against women.

which has one of the world's highest rates of rape but also some of the most innovative programs to deal with the problem. Some seminars have been held

in conjunction with international conferences and other events, such as the biennial AIDS conferences and special U.N. sessions. Other seminar themes



Reporters pose after a presentation at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

have included links between gender and the environment, women's empowerment and women's reproductive health.

Sometimes a journalist's report prompts action. After a magazine cover story on the health and social problems child brides face in India, the Tamil Nadu state government launched awareness campaigns in villages where child marriage is common. More often, the journalists receive calls from

ministry officials, parliamentarians and NGO leaders who want more information. A Malawian journalist wrote about an innovative rape crisis center her Women's Edition group visited in Johannesburg. She received a call from the Malawian president's daughter, who wanted to become involved in local efforts to replicate it. Sometimes journalists take action on their own: A seminar visit to a rape crisis center in New York so inspired

an Indian journalist that she persuaded a physician friend to open such a center in Mumbai.

Women's Edition has a lasting impact on the journalists themselves. They become the experts in their newsrooms on women's issues. They gain confidence in their knowledge and abilities, which helps them to lobby for coverage of women's issues. They receive job promotions and gain more influence over what issues are considered newsworthy. "Gone are the days when health and women's issues were a once-a-week affair," said Ropa Mapimhidze of Zimbabwe, who was assistant editor at the *Herald* when she participated in Women's Edition. She is now features editor at *Newsday*, a new independent newspaper.

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**Deborah Mesce** is program director for international media training at the Population Reference Bureau and has been coordinator of Women's Edition since 2001. Before joining PRB, she worked for more than 20 years as a reporter and editor for the Associated Press in the Connecticut state bureau and on the national staff in Washington.





CHAPTER

# 11



## WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Because of women's relationship with the environment, they can be critical agents of environmental conservation, sustainable development and adaptation to climate change. In Darfur, Sudan, women carry firewood to the Abbu Shouk refugee camp.

# WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

*By* Cate Owren

**T**he world's women are the key to sustainable development, peace and security," U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told participants at the Earth Institute's State of the Planet meeting at Columbia University, in New York City, in March 2010. Because women are the chief resource managers for their families in many parts of the world, their engagement in remedies for and adaptation to climate change is essential.

Across the regions and cultures of the world, women play critical roles in relation to their natural environment. Often deeply dependent on available natural resources for food, fuel and shelter, women can be particularly vulnerable to environmental changes or threats. Because women's workload is often centered on managing natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, their experiences and perspectives are essential to sustainable development policymaking and actions at every level, for a healthy planet for generations to come.

## Resource Managers

Women in the developing world are predominantly responsible for management and conservation of resources for their families. Women spend vast amounts of time collecting and storing water,



securing sources of fuel, food and fodder, and managing land — be it forest, wetlands or agricultural terrain. As women are primary caregivers to children, the elderly and the sick, whole communities rely on them. Their traditional and generational knowledge of biodiversity, for example, supplies communities with medicines, nutritional balance and crop rotation methods. When drought, erratic rainfall or severe storms affect access to these basic resources, women's lives — and their families' lives — can be intensely affected. In fact, studies have shown that natural disasters disproportionately hit

Locally built energy-efficient cookstoves help women manage resources sustainably and preserve Virunga Park forests in the Democratic Republic of Congo. USAID partners with WWF to support such ventures.



women, lowering female life expectancy rates and killing more women than men, especially where levels of gender equality are low.

Women constitute just over half the world's population, but women are responsible for feeding much of it — especially in rural regions of developing countries. Women produce between 60 and 80 percent of food in developing countries — and yet they officially own only 2 percent of land worldwide, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. Historical inheritance laws and customs often prohibit or limit women's direct control over land; even when women are able to own and lease land, they may not be able to secure loans or insurance to keep their resources safe. The lack of equitable land rights remains a major obstacle to women's empowerment and poverty alleviation.

## International Agreements

International agreements have made crucial links between women and the environment; the challenge is to take action. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), an international “bill of rights” for women, addresses a host of environmental issues. Likewise, the Beijing Platform for Action, an outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), includes an entire chapter on women and the environment. It foreshadowed the different impacts global warming would have on women and men, which are now evident across the globe.

Major sustainable development treaties, also, have acknowledged the specific need for women's participation and for a mainstreamed gender perspective. The 1992 United Nations Earth Summit

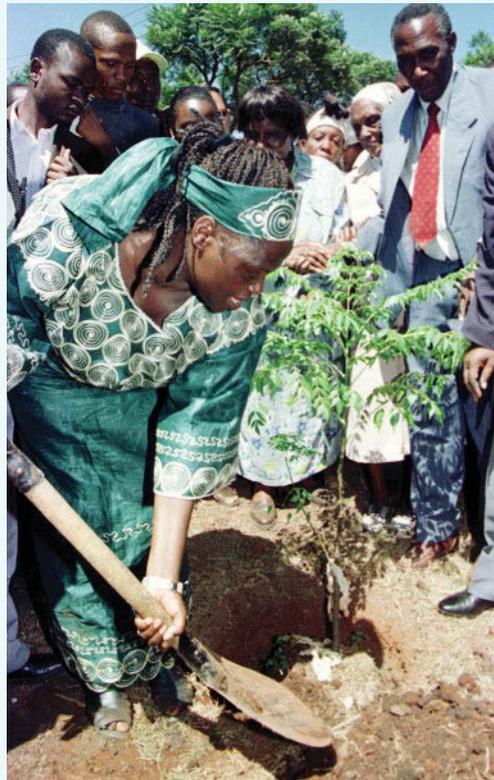
Women conservationists include professionals and volunteers. This volunteer exercises a baby cougar at the Machia Park in Villa Tunari, Bolivia. The park shelters abused animals thanks to Inti Wara Yassi, a Bolivian NGO.



Left: A woman in Tsetan, Tibetan Autonomous Region, China, uses a home-made solar cooker to boil water. Below: Environmental activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai plants a tree in Uhuru Park, Nairobi, Kenya, in 1999. Maathai founded the Green Belt conservation movement in 1977 and fought for women's rights. She died in 2011.

(UNCED) produced two key conventions — on biological diversity and on combating desertification — that have served as guides for implementation of environmental actions from a gender perspective. The overall UNCED document, Agenda 21, included a specific chapter on gender, which highlighted the important role women play in industrialized countries as sustainable consumers. Indeed, the links between women and environment are not solely concentrated in the global South (i.e., developing countries). Studies have shown that women in the North (i.e., developed countries) have a smaller carbon footprint than men, making the majority of “green” decisions at the household level and for travel according to a 2007 Swedish government report.

These international agreements indicate that, worldwide, women must be equal participants in all decisions related





to their environment. Demonstrating great capacity as leaders, experts, educators and innovators, women and women's movements have made great strides in preserving and protecting the resources around them. Women took the lead in the grass-roots Chipko Movement of India in the 1970s, where activists stopped the felling of trees by physically surrounding — literally hugging — the trees. They also protected water sources from corporate control. Similarly, the Green Belt Movement, the conservation and forestry movement which originated in Kenya on Earth Day in 1977, is another famous effort initiated by women. Women around the world continue the fight against climate change, making sustainable consumption choices, and improving access to, control over and conservation of resources. Their voices must continue to be

comprehensively integrated into policy and implementation efforts at every stage for the well-being of future generations.

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**Cate Owren** is executive director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), a women's global advocacy organization working to empower women as decisionmakers to achieve economic and social justice. Founded specifically to influence the 1992 Earth Summit (UNCED), WEDO strives to integrate gender perspectives and women's direct participation internationally. Most recently, WEDO's advocacy efforts contributed to securing the first-ever gender text in the U.N. negotiations on climate change.

**A woman learns to be a “barefoot engineer” at Barefoot College, Tilonia, in Rajasthan, India. After six months of training, women return to their villages where they install and maintain solar-powered lighting systems.**

PROFILE

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# Aleksandra Koroleva

A Passion for Environmental Protection

*By* Alexey Milovanov



Russian environmental activist Aleksandra Koroleva's efforts to preserve the environment and protect people from environmental pollution are tireless, and her unorthodox approach is often successful.

**E**nvironmental activist Aleksandra Koroleva has devoted much of her life to protecting the pristine environment in the Kaliningrad region in the Russian Federation, on the Baltic Sea. The unique and complex habitats there include wetlands, forests, rivers and marshes. It is home to diverse ecosystems and migratory birds. She has worked within and outside of the government not only to preserve precious natural resources but to protect citizens from dangerous environmental pollution.

Koroleva was a member of a newly formed state environmental protection committee after the Soviet Union fell apart. She says that at the time it seemed the committee could significantly help to responsibly conserve the environment. Prior to this, Koroleva worked at a university, a school and a regional history museum where she dealt with environmental issues. In her new position her task was to raise public awareness, primarily through the mass media. The work was not going badly; she had even created the first radio program in the Kaliningrad region devoted wholly to environmental problems. The program aired for several years. But soon the legacy of the Soviet years, the bureaucracy, stalled her efforts.

Because of her upbringing she couldn't bring herself to accept defeat. She is like her mother, renowned botanist and

dendrologist Galina Kucheneva. "She had some kind of tremendous inner drive, she didn't just study trees as a botanist but sought to preserve them for the future," Koroleva recalls. "I, of course, inherited only a tiny bit of her confidence, but I have that drive, too, and it won't let me take things lying down."

Russian society was in a very turbulent state in the early 1990s. The disappearance of the authoritarian Communist regime and the sudden ability to freely express opinions gave rise to many new movements and organizations. One of them was the group Ecodefense! [Eko-zashchita! in Russian]. It was founded by young people determined to effectively address environmental issues by following the Western environmental activist model. They chose as their slogan the high-flown but honest "No compromise in defense of Mother Earth!" A meeting with Ecodefense! activist Vladimir Sliviyak led Koroleva to make a 180-degree turn, leave government service and begin a new stage in life. Koroleva recalls, "He said, 'Let's do something and not wait until the government permits us to write an article and conduct an environmental study.' He showed you can simply do what you think is necessary and important."

The list of "necessary and important" items is so long that it could occupy a dozen full-scale organizations. Yet Ecodefense!

functioned admirably during its first 15 years, without any legal status. Among other endeavors, it agitated against pollution of the region's water resources by harmful substances such as dioxins. It also opposed importation of foreign nuclear waste materials into the country. It protected the nature reserves of the Curonian Spit, a long, narrow sandbar that stretches across the Curonian Lagoon between the Kaliningrad region and Lithuania, from dangerous oil-extraction projects on the Baltic shelf. Ecodefense! fought to preserve trees in downtown Kaliningrad. And, of course, it promoted environmental education with all available means. The top priority was always to make people aware of environmental issues and how to solve the problems. Ecodefense! held press conferences and issued reports and press releases in years when this was a novelty in Russia, even for businesses. Ecodefense! successfully used the media to convey an independent environmental message. "Even now, when our work is not as intensive, journalists call me almost every day," says Koroleva.

Ecodefense! used dramatic methods to attract media attention, so journalists would write about "those ecofreaks" and the public would read about them. When trees were cut down in the city of Kaliningrad, activists under Koroleva's leadership carried a log in a coffin to the doors

of the city hall and stood around it with votive candles. When analyses carried out at the initiative of the environmentalists revealed the presence of dioxins in the waste water of the local paper

factory, young people strolled downtown wearing the masks of mutants in order to draw attention to possible consequences. Koroleva describes another effort she led: "We brought to



Aleksandra Koroleva works with other activists at the Curonian Spit, Kaliningrad Region, Russian Federation.

the district government building a huge mock-up of a nuclear power plant, with a pipe emitting acrid orange smoke. And we handcuffed ourselves to the entrance of that building, dressed in the costumes of oil-spattered pigs, in order to show the danger of the Lukoil Company's plans to extract petroleum 22 kilometers from the reserves on the Curonian Spit. Oh, those were good times, and I sometimes regret that Ecodefense! and I have gone our separate ways."

Such *outré* behavior was shocking and aroused suspicions which still persist among Koroleva's numerous detractors. Many times Aleksandra Koroleva and her colleagues were accused of being in the pay of business competitors of the people they fought against or foreign intelligence services, from the CIA to Mossad. Koroleva routinely had to counter false media reports.

Teaching is as necessary as breathing to Koroleva, but her dynamism often frightens people unprepared for her zeal. For 10 years Ecodefense! conducted a project to observe nature in the Baltic region in which children participated. Thousands of schoolchildren learned about the Baltic ecosystem in theory and in practice through this program. They cleared refuse from the coast, took eco-tours and networked with their peers from other countries in international nature camps.

Under Aleksandra Koroleva's leadership the first environmental referendum in Kaliningrad was held on the construction of an oil terminal in the port of Svetly. Her books helped stop dangerous projects and prevent tree clearing, and gave people confidence in their power to defend their right to clean air and water. She encouraged them to change what they do not agree with and control the often harmful activity of officials — new ideas to citizens of the former Soviet Union. Koroleva also educated officials by participating in numerous public councils, drafting new laws and criticizing officials who closed their eyes to environmental crimes. "In the end, the authorities acknowledged the existence and importance of the third sector [nongovernmental organizations], whether it was us or someone else," says Koroleva. "We were striving precisely for that acknowledgment, and it was a victory. The doors we opened are now accessible for many other activists."

Koroleva urges everyone — children, teachers, officials, activists — not only to think but to do something concrete. For several years she organized the "Environmental Landing Force on the Curonian Spit" to strengthen dunes and clear away refuse in the national park, recruiting not only students and activists, but high-ranking officials, politicians and diplomats.

She transformed conservation of the national park into a genuine mass movement.

History has a way of repeating itself. Twenty years later Koroleva joined a government agency again, as deputy director of the Curonian Spit National Park. Although she recently resigned to protest new policies — the same inner drive causing her to reject the bureaucratic approach — Koroleva plans to continue her environmental work with Ecodefense! "I'm ready again to go back to my roots," she says.

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Alexey Milovanov worked with Aleksandra Koroleva as a press officer and campaigner for the Ecodefense! environmental group for five years. He has been a freelance journalist and photographer since 2005 and is currently chief editor at the local online news agency [www.NewKaliningrad.Ru](http://www.NewKaliningrad.Ru).

# Barefoot Solar Engineers

*By* Anu Saxena

A revolution is happening in Barefoot College in rural Rajasthan, India. It is a quiet revolution that brings solar energy and clean technology to the poorest rural communities, changing the face of rural development. At the forefront of this revolution are semiliterate or illiterate rural women from Asia, Africa and Latin America, many of them grandmothers, who are trained to work as skilled solar engineers.

**B**arefoot College was founded in 1972 in Tilonia, Rajasthan, India, by social activist and educator Bunker Roy. Its purpose is to find simple, sustainable solutions to basic quality of life problems in rural communities: clean water, renewable energy, education and health care. Stable livelihoods and women's empowerment are also among Barefoot College's goals. Solar energy is an important "barefoot solution," and women — especially grandmothers — are preferred candidates for solar engineer training. As Bunker Roy puts it, "We have trained men, and found that they took their training and knowledge to go work in the cities. [Women] feel responsible for their village." Rural grandmothers have a longer history in the community and have less incentive to migrate. This keeps the knowledge and technology in the community. Their expertise is shared with others, ensuring project sustainability.

Treating the community members as partners and letting them manage and own

their resources and technology are unique features of the Barefoot program. The trainees all hail from remote communities that have never known conventional electricity and where literacy rates are low, especially for women and girls. They are selected by community consensus and, upon their return, are paid by the community to install, maintain and repair the solar units at a percentage of the monthly energy costs that would otherwise have been spent on the alternatives — fuels, candles and batteries.

Since 2005, 250 of these village women from 29 countries have brought solar electrification to around 10,000 houses, in regions as diverse as the hot desert plains of Rajasthan and rural hamlets tucked in the cold, mountainous, windswept plateaus of Ladakh, in India; Timbuktu, Mali, in Africa; and Soloja, Bolivia, high in the Andes. Most poor rural households that Barefoot College has helped in Africa and Latin America use approximately 1.5-2 gallons of kerosene per month for their lighting and cooking



Rural grandmothers are being trained as solar engineers at a Barefoot College workshop session.

needs, according to the Barefoot College experience with rural households. It is estimated that this consumption emits an estimated 14.74-19.65 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> (Richard J. Komp, 2002). Switching to solar power has reduced environmental pollution and forest degradation in these communities by decreasing their use of firewood, diesel and kerosene. Using solar power has lowered rural families' lighting costs and reduced the levels of indoor pollutants and the fire hazards of kerosene use. The study conditions for schoolchildren are improved and women can engage in income-generating activities, such as handicrafts, after sundown.

The extraordinary results achieved by Barefoot College began with its six-month, hands-on solar engineering training program. The guiding principle of the college, that solutions to rural problems lie within the community, is nowhere more evident than at a solar engineering training classroom, where 30 participants, from various countries, sit side by side on benches, working with concentration to connect wires on a circuit board, assemble a solar lantern or draw what they have just created in a small notebook. Since there is no one common language among the trainees or instructors, the women learn to identify parts by color and use hand gestures liberally. Waves, smiles and greetings in a variety of languages



Sita Bai, a solar cooker mechanic, stands beside one of the devices she is trained to assemble and repair.

welcome the visitor to this Barefoot United Nations of Women, collaborating to bring light and hope to their communities.

The same enthusiasm and entrepreneurial activities pervade the Barefoot College campus. A short distance from the classroom, two impressive-looking

2.5-square-meter parabolic solar cookers glisten in the sunlight. The cookers are attended by Shahnaz and Sita, two Barefoot solar engineers (BSEs). They went through the basic solar program before specializing in the fabrication of cookers — a task traditionally associated

with men, as it involves metal work and welding. As they explain some of the intricacies of constructing and calibrating the cooker, their pride in their work is evident. They now train other women to make the cookers. Sita has even found a way to reach a broader audience by composing a song with her colleagues on the benefits of using solar cookers, which they sing for community education programs. The story of their personal journey from conservative families, where

they were limited to socially prescribed tasks, to their roles as educators, skillful mechanics and wage-earners is a powerful narrative of change.

As women's participation in environmental management has increased, they have become more visible. Women now have a voice in local politics. Examples are the Solar Warriors of Bhutan and the BSEs of Ethiopia, who petitioned their governments to start local BSE women's associations. Women enjoy an

improved status in their communities because of their valuable contribution. Referring to their local BSE, a male village elder in Bolivia says admiringly, "She is better at this than I am ... and I am a car mechanic!"

By enrolling women and their communities as partners, Barefoot College has increased community awareness of sustainable practices while supporting traditional knowledge. Workshops on how to dispose of plastic responsibly, use solar cookers, improve management of water resources, including rain water harvesting, and other good practices that are kinder to the environment enhance the quality of rural life.

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**Anu Saxena** has been involved with international development programs in marginalized communities, with a focus on gender issues, for more than 20 years. She earned her doctorate in social anthropology from Boston University and did her fieldwork in Colombia. She is currently the Latin America adviser to the Barefoot College (India) Solar Engineering program.



These Mauritanian women install solar panels in their village after training at Barefoot College in India, where they learned to be solar engineers. They receive income for their work.





CHAPTER

# 12



## RIGHTS OF THE GIRL CHILD

Girl children are denied their human rights in many countries. This girl in a Bangalore, India, slum may face not only economic hardship but discrimination and exploitation because of her sex.

# THE GIRL CHILD

*By* Robin N. Haarr

**I**n many cultures and societies, the girl child is denied her human rights and sometimes her basic needs. She is at increased risk of sexual abuse and exploitation and other harmful practices that negatively affect her survival, development and ability to achieve to her fullest potential. Because girls are particularly vulnerable, they require additional protections. The girl child is one of the 12 critical areas in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which recommends elimination of all forms of discrimination and abuse of girls and protection of their rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, sets forth the basic human rights of children, usually those under 18 years of age. These rights include nondiscrimination; the right to survival and development of potential; protection from harmful influences, abuses and exploitation; and full participation in family, cultural and social life. The convention also spells out some human rights violations that are unique to the girl child, including discrimination based upon sex, prenatal sex selection, female genital mutilation and early marriage.



## **Cultural Influences on Treatment of Girl Children**

Discrimination and harmful practices against the girl child vary depending upon cultural context. For instance, intentional abortion of female fetuses and female infanticide are common practices in East and South Asian countries where sons are strongly preferred. India and China have

A Sudanese schoolgirl stands outside her classroom at the Greida refugee camp near Nyala, Darfur.

a significant sex-ratio imbalance in their populations as a result of these practices, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2005). In India such practices are reinforced by the perception that daughters are an economic burden on the family. They do not significantly contribute to the family income and large dowries may be expected by in-laws when the girl marries. In China, sex selectivity and abandonment of infant girls have increased dramatically since the enactment of the one-child policy in 1989. Prenatal sex selection is more common where modern medical technology is readily accessible and open to misuse. According to the UNFPA 2004 report, sex-selective abortion and female infanticide have resulted in at least 60 million “missing” girls in Asia. The shortage of females in some Asian countries has led to other problems, such as increased trafficking in women for marriage and sex work. Despite government programs and efforts to end such practices with education, financial incentives and threat of punishment, sex-selective abortion and female infanticide continue.

The status of girls is significantly less than that of boys in some countries. This makes girls more vulnerable to discrimination and neglect. Available indicators reveal that girls are discriminated against from the earliest stages of life in the areas

of nutrition, health care, education, family care and protection. Girls are often fed less, particularly when there are diminished food resources. A diet low in

Turkish authorities discourage the traditional practice of child marriage in rural towns such as Acarlar, where this young woman walks with a baby.





calories, protein and nutrients negatively affects girls' growth and development. Less likely to receive basic health care, they are at increased risk of childhood mortality.

Girls are more likely to be denied education. In 2007, an estimated 101 million children worldwide — the majority of whom were girls — did not attend primary schools (UNICEF, 2010). Africa, the Middle East and South Asia have the largest gender gaps in education. Girls from poor and rural households are especially likely to be denied education. Knowledge

and skills needed for employment, empowerment and advancement in status often are withheld because of customary attitudes about educating boys over girls. Girls are more likely to be used as child labor inside and outside of the home. Yet there are many benefits of investing in girls' education. Healthier families, lower fertility rates, improved economic performance and poverty reduction are among them. Educating girls in a supportive, gender-sensitive environment is critical to achieving gender equality.

Primary school students at al-Yasmin school for girls in Baghdad, Iraq, open boxes of educational supplies provided by UNICEF to children in war zones.

The United Nations Population Fund estimates that 100 million to 140 million girls and women have undergone genital mutilation and at least 3 million girls are at risk of the practice every year. Most cases occur in regions of Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In Egypt, it is estimated that 75 percent of girls between 15 and 17 years of age have undergone genital mutilation, a practice which has immediate and long-term negative consequences on girls and women's health and well-being, and complications can be fatal. Some countries in Africa, Europe and North America have banned genital mutilation; nevertheless, the practice continues.

Child marriage is another human rights violation that occurs in Africa, South and Central Asia and the Middle East. The highest rates are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where girls are married as early as 7 years of age, but often before 15 or 18 years of age. According to UNICEF statistics, in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Niger more than 60 percent of women married before 18 years of age. In India, 47 percent of women married before 18 years of age. In Yemen, more than 25 percent of girls marry before 15 years of age. Child marriage is a form of sexual abuse that separates girls from family and friends, isolates them socially, restricts education and leaves them vulnerable to violence from husbands and in-laws. Child brides face health risks and even death related to premature forced sex — often with a significantly older husband — and early pregnancies. They are also at increased risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

However, grass-roots movements can implement change successfully. An example is the Kembatti Mentti

Gezzimma–Tope, spearheaded by Dr. Bogaletch Gebre in Ethiopia to stop genital mutilation. Or the Marriage Without Risk Network in Yemen, which links several NGOs that educate communities and advocate to curb child marriage.

Besides eliminating abuse and discrimination, the Beijing Platform for Action recommends enhanced development and training to improve girl's status and eliminate their economic exploitation. Awareness of girls' needs and potential should be improved in society and among the girls themselves so they may participate fully in social, economic and political life. Progress has been made, but much remains to be done to protect girls' rights and assure them a future in which they may benefit themselves and their communities.

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**Robin Haarr** is a professor of criminal justice at Eastern Kentucky University whose research focuses on violence against women and children and human trafficking, nationally and internationally. She does research and policy work for the United Nations and U.S. embassies and has received several awards for her work, including induction into the Wall of Fame at Michigan State University's School of Criminal Justice and the Coramae Richey Mann "Inconvenient Woman of the Year" Award from the American Society of Criminology, Division on Women and Crime.

PROFILE

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# Bogaletch Gebre

Trading New Traditions for Old

*By* Julia Rosenbaum



Fueled by a dream, Dr. Bogaletch Gebre worked hard with dedication to obtain an education. She became a physician. Ever since, she has worked to empower women in her native Ethiopia, replacing harmful practices with healthy ones — one village at a time.

“No mother, no family would intentionally harm their child,” explains Dr. Bogaletch Gebre, founder of the Kembatti Mentti Gezzimma–Tope (KMG), which means “women of Kembatta working together,” a women’s self-help center in southern Ethiopia. Gebre is a champion of women’s development. She has also worked hard to end female genital mutilation, a traditional practice in Africa.

Boge, as she is called, comes from a farming family in Kembatta, southern Ethiopia. Her father protected the weak, widowed and orphaned in their community, giving to those whose harvest was not enough. She describes her mother as a wise, generous and loving woman who believed people do wrong out of ignorance, “because,” their mother told them,

“when one wrongs the other, it hurts oneself more than the one who was wronged.” Like all young women of her day, Boge looked forward to her circumcision ceremony, when, she said, “People would start seeing me differently; looking at me in a new and better light.”

Growing up in a family of 14, she and her younger sister Fikirte were inseparable. They were the first girls in their village to have higher education. Boge attended Hebrew University in Jerusalem on a full scholarship. Later the sisters went to the United States. Boge was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Massachusetts, where she studied epidemiology and public health. News of the 1984-87 famine in their homeland prompted the sisters to help. Fikirte focused on improving access to clean water for her village. She started a business brewing



Bogaletch Gebre speaks to villagers in a remote area of Ethiopia’s southern Kembatta Tembaro zone to raise awareness about the danger of female genital mutilation.

up tasty sauces and donated part of the profits to her water project. Boge tackled education and livelihood for young women by founding Parents International Ethiopia—Development through Education. She rallied U.S. supporters to end a “book famine” as pervasive as the food famine. She ran fundraising marathons which sent more than 300,000 books on science, medicine and law to Ethiopia.

Boge’s own awakening about genital mutilation grew from the rage and horror over what was done to her as a young woman, what was done to all the girls of her village. “I understood that the purpose of female genital excision was to excise my mind, excise my ability to live my life with all my senses intact,” she said. “I was never meant to be educated, to think for myself, because I am a woman born in a small village in Ethiopia. It’s a system that looks at a woman as an object of servitude. She starts serving her family at the age of 6 — before she even knows who she is. When she marries she is literally sold to the highest bidder. From one servitude to another, we are exploited.”

Boge returned home in 1997 with \$5,000 and a vision. With her sister she founded KMG in 1999. The self-help center now includes a skills training center, library, heritage house, a health care center and a guest house and hosts a women’s discussion group. At first they were

uncertain about how to realize their vision to break the cycle of violence against women and provide development opportunities.

Boge started with a baseline survey about women’s conditions: health and HIV/AIDS; men’s and women’s education; economic opportunities for women; and female genital mutilation. The results were presented in a community forum where the discussion lit a spark. “Women started speaking out ... crying. ... Everyone knew the pain and risk of cutting, but perpetuated the practice because they thought it was God-given and was essential if a woman was to be considered marriageable.”

Momentum was building. In June 2002, 78 young schoolgirls marched with placards that read: “I refuse to be circumcised, learn from me.” Two young sweethearts boldly defied tradition, to

marry without genital mutilation. They appealed to the local priest, who was already sensitized through KMG outreach. He agreed to support them. At their wedding the bride wore a placard declaring that she was not circumcised, and the groom wore a sign stating his happiness to marry “an uncircumcised, whole girl.” Similar marriages followed, in which couples publicly rejected female genital mutilation. Support groups were formed; there was peer outreach education. “They’ve become our foot soldiers, a social force in their communities,” says Boge. “Girls rally together, singing songs and wearing signs, ‘We are your daughters! Do not harm us.’” A new event introduced in 2004, “Whole Body, Healthy Life — Freedom from Female Genital Excision,” which aims to replace harmful mutilation rituals



An Ethiopian couple celebrates their wedding wearing signs declaring their opposition to female genital mutilation.



Fuga (potters) are marginalized social outcasts who are denied basic rights in Ethiopia. KMG helps these artisans by educating them about human rights and through advocacy on their behalf. Here a village of potters assembles to discuss community issues.

with life celebrations, has been very well attended. The day is recognized as a freedom day, a new tradition that is celebrated every year.

Today, female genital mutilation has been largely eliminated in KMG's outreach area of 1.5 million people. A 2008 UNICEF study documents the transformation after a decade of intervention in which female circumcision has dramatically decreased to less than 3 percent. This has been accomplished by law and through education of communities about the harm of the practice.

Boge says that support from KMG has helped communities "to trust and unleash their collective wisdom, thereby recognizing their own capacity to effect measurable and

sustainable change. We just need to give them the space."

Community representatives — students and teachers, boys, girls, literate and illiterate, women and men, midwives, religious leaders, and elders — all meet regularly to discuss concerns, build relationships, share learning and reach consensus. Boge says, "Solutions lie within." KMG facilitates and encourages discussion. "Once they make their commitments, they abide by them."

It is a holistic approach, Boge says, that recognizes "the indivisibility of social, cultural, economic and political dynamics that affect societies and women in particular ... linking ecology, economy and society." She adds, "In Kembatta, as in other rural regions, social

turmoil, environmental degradation and loss of the traditional income base all reinforce attitudes which victimize women and perpetuate violence against women."

The success of Bogaletch Gebre has meant broader influence of the KMG model in other regions and countries and in policymaking. "We don't need miracles," she says. "We need commitment to action, creativity and hard work. And, of course, we need to support each other, as people who share this one world."

"My dream for African women? That the world realizes that women's suppression is no good for business, for the economy, nor for human development. We must end gender apartheid," she says.

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**Julia Rosenbaum** is senior program officer, Health, Population and Nutrition Group, for the Washington-based Academy for Educational Development. She provides technical input and management to global maternal and child health programs. She has worked in Ethiopia for the past six years through USAID's Hygiene Improvement Project on community-led approaches for hygiene and sanitation improvement and related HIV care and support programs.

# Changing Hearts and Minds: Averting Child Marriage in Yemen

*By* Dalia Al-Eryani and Laurel Lundstrom

Child marriage is one of the biggest threats to young girls in Yemen. It often prevents them from getting an education and following their dreams. It can be devastating physically, psychologically, economically and socially. Local organizations work to improve the prospects of girls by ensuring that they remain unmarried and in school.

She speaks from the heart, like a typical 8-year-old. “I want to be a doctor,” says Arwa (not her real name), revealing a gap in her smile from a missing baby tooth. But her future is not her own.

“I want to work with all sick people,” she quietly insists. “I don’t want to get married at all. I want to stay with my mother.” Despite her dreams, Arwa already understands that the desires of her grandfather will more likely dictate her future.

And her grandfather has different plans. He has already betrothed Arwa to her cousin. Like most child brides, she will not continue with her education. She will be taken from her mother, forced out of school and required to abandon any aspirations of a medical career.

“The greatest problem facing Yemeni women today is child marriages,” says Wafa Ahmad Ali of the Yemeni Women’s Union (YWU), one of several local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) trying to change the prospects of young girls like Arwa by ensuring they remain

unmarried and in school until they are at least 18. The YWU is reaching out to Arwa’s grandfather, hoping he will allow her to live out her dreams. The YWU has helped avert the marriages of 79 children in 2009-2010, through an initiative called the “Safe Age of Marriage” Project.

The YWU works with the Extending Service Delivery Project, which focuses on reproductive health and family planning, and the Basic Health Services Project to transform the opinions of religious leaders, community leaders and families to value girls’ education over early marriage. It’s not an easy task. The YWU faces resistance from community members who think the organization is “meddling with local norms and traditions,” says Wafa Ali. Poverty and conservative views about the role of women are also problems.

Coordinators from the YWU oversee a team of 40 volunteer community educators — 20 men and 20 women — concentrated in Amran governorate’s Al Sawdah and Al Soodah districts, where 59 percent of families marry off their daughters before the age



فوزية عبدالله يوسف

ضحية الزواج المبكر

فوزية عبدالله يوسف

ضحية الزواج المبكر

Yemeni schoolgirls  
in Sana'a carry signs  
denouncing child  
marriage, a practice  
still common in  
Yemen.



of 18. The governorate's capital city, Amran, an ancient trading center, is located about 50 kilometers north of Yemen's capital, Sana'a. Only 1 percent of women in Amran governorate have attended school, according to a baseline assessment conducted by the Safe Age of Marriage Project.

The volunteers raise awareness about the social and health consequences of child marriage through lively discussions, film screenings, plays, writing competitions, poetry readings, debates and literacy classes. One of their main lessons is about the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy. The messages about family planning are tailored to

be appropriate for Islamic communities, and encourage girls not to get pregnant for the first time until they are at least 18.

Safia, one of YWU's community educators, frequently hears about the consequences of child marriage and early pregnancy. "My 16-year-old daughter is cursed," says a woman at one of Safia's sessions. She adds that each time the girl has tried to bring a new life into the world, she has failed. "The babies always die," she says. "But my 20-year-old daughter, she is not cursed. She has healthy babies." Safia advised the woman that because her daughter had married early, she and her babies were at an increased risk of death. The

mother's reaction: "My daughter isn't cursed after all!"

By delaying marriage, the project aims to slow maternal, newborn and infant deaths and associated conditions such as obstetric fistula, childhood deformities, mental illness, depression and domestic violence. Other organizations around the country with similar goals include the Marriage Without Risks Network, a group of five local NGOs funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative. Each NGO approaches child marriage from a different angle: some focus on grass-roots awareness campaigns, classroom workshops or media campaigns; others conduct studies



Girls at school in Yemen's Amran Governorate learn about the negative consequences of child marriage.



Cooperation of men in the community is essential. Here Sheikh Yahya Ahmed Abdulrahman Al-Naggar engages other Yemeni religious leaders and men as he sensitizes them to the importance of reproductive health and family planning.

to determine the prevalence and effects of early marriage on girls and their families; and others advocate for change by engaging decisionmakers such as parliamentarians and religious leaders. The network outreach allows the groups to connect with other like-minded organizations throughout Yemen, from international organizations to community groups to Islamic foundations, that work to eliminate child marriage. By sharing successful approaches, members of the network enhance its effectiveness.

“Fistula!” shouts a young girl in response to a question about the health risks of early marriage. The girl, who wears a white scarf, speaks confidently to the audience, describing how this injury, caused by complications during childbirth, can ruin a woman’s life. Girls whose bodies are not

fully developed are particularly at risk for fistula. Community educators explain such risks to impress upon the girls and their families the importance of marriage at a safe age.

By attending a similar session, Ali, another community member, changed from being an advocate for child marriage into a strong advocate for delaying marriage. In fact, when he met a father whose daughter, at age 13, was about to be married, he argued so passionately to stop the marriage that he convinced the father to break off the engagement — and he paid the father back part of the dowry already sacrificed to the groom-to-be. There was no wedding, and the daughter is back in school.

The Safe Age of Marriage Project has reached nearly 41,000 people, and child marriage for girls between 10 and 17

has decreased in both districts. In Al Soodah, the community is trying to pass a local law dictating a “safe age of marriage.”

The intervention is now being spread to two neighboring districts, with plans to expand it nationally in the future.

Ali says that the YWU will spread the intervention to seven to eight more governorates. “Part of the strategic plan for the YWU is to do advocacy with local authorities and decisionmakers and ask them to take measures to guarantee girls get married at a safe age,” he says.

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**Dalia Al-Eryani** is the project coordinator of the Safe Age of Marriage Project in Yemen, which educates communities on the risks of early marriage. A Fulbright Fellow, she works with Yemen’s Basic Health Services Project.

**Laurel Lundstrom** served as the communications officer for the Extending Service Delivery Project, USAID’s flagship reproductive health and family planning project. She has written for the United Nations, *Global Health* magazine and the World Health Organization, and co-produced a short documentary on maternal and newborn health in Yemen.

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[www.womenthrive.org](http://www.womenthrive.org)



#### EDUCATION

##### Bahia Street, Equality Through Education

Bahia Street is a nonprofit organization that works to break cycles of poverty and violence through quality education for impoverished girls and young women in Salvador, Brazil.  
<http://www.bahiastreet.org/>



##### The Millenium Development Goals Report 2011

[http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/11\\_MDG%20Report\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/11_MDG%20Report_EN.pdf)



##### Tostan Jokko Initiative

Tostan is a nongovernmental organization whose mission is to empower African communities through sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights. Tostan provides education to adults and adolescents who have not had access to formal schooling.  
<http://www.tostan.org/web/page/824/sectionid/547/pagelevel/2/interior.asp>



#### HEALTH

##### AVERT

AVERT is a U.K.-based international HIV and AIDS charity that works to prevent HIV and AIDS worldwide through education, treatment and care.  
[www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)



##### mothers2mothers

mothers2mothers is an nongovernmental organization that helps to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.  
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Based on the latest data from 182 countries, this global reference book provides comprehensive analysis on the AIDS epidemic and response.  
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UNAIDS website which focuses on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.  
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The International Labour Organization promotes equality between all women and men in the world of work.  
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*onlinewomeninpolitics.org* explores creative ways in organizing a network of Asia-Pacific women involved in politics, governance, decisionmaking and transformative leadership.  
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*Who Makes the News?* is the largest and longest longitudinal study on gender in the world's news media.

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<http://www.wifp.org/DWM/publishers.html>

**ENVIRONMENT****Barefoot College**

The Barefoot College is a nongovernmental organization that provides services and solutions to problems in rural communities, with the objective of making communities self-sufficient.

<http://www.barefootcollege.org/>

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

This is the home page for the FAO.

[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

**Johnsson-Latham, Gerd.** *A Study on Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Sustainable Development*.

Stockholm, Sweden: Ministry of the Environment, Sweden, 2007.

<http://www.genderandenvironment.org/archangel2/documentos/447.pdf>



**Neumayer, Eric and Plümper, Thomas.** "The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981-2002." London, England: London School of Economics, 2007.

[http://www.gdonline.org/resources/SSRN\\_Neumayer\\_Plumper\\_GenderedNature\\_NaturalDisasters.pdf](http://www.gdonline.org/resources/SSRN_Neumayer_Plumper_GenderedNature_NaturalDisasters.pdf)

**THE GIRL CHILD****UNICEF. Basic Education and Gender Equality**

[http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index\\_access.html](http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_access.html)

**UNICEF. Child Protection from Violence, Exploitation and Abuse**

[http://www.unicef.org/protection/index\\_earlymarriage.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_earlymarriage.html)

**UNICEF. The State of the World's Children Report**

<http://www.unicef.org/publications/index.html>

**GENERAL****Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>



## U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995

The home page of the landmark conference includes many resources.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/fwcwn.html>



## U.N. Population Fund: State of the World's Population, 2010

<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>



## U.N. Women

U.N. Women is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

<http://www.unwomen.org/>



## U.S. Department of State — Office of Global Women's Issues

The following are the home and Facebook pages of the Office of Global Women's Issues:

<http://www.facebook.com/dos.sgwi>

<http://www.state.gov/s/gwi/>



## USAID: Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment

USAID promotes gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/wid/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/)



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“However different we may appear,  
there is far more that unites us  
than divides us. We share a  
common future, and we are here  
to find common ground so that we  
may help bring new dignity and  
respect to women and girls  
all over the world.”

Hillary Rodham Clinton  
4th U.N. World Conference on Women  
Beijing, China, September 1995



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