



network

The UN Women's Newsletter, Vol. 9 • No. 2 • April, May, June 2005

Letter from the Focal Point for Women

With great pleasure we bring yet another issue of network to your tables and your screens. It is our hope that material contained in this issue will arm you with information of practical use, assisting to reinforce your own efforts to further gender equality in the work place.

The issue of the representation of women is ever present and ever challenging. This issue contains a synopsis of an article that correlates retention of women in the workforce to the imperative of flexibility. It is a correlation of which many advocates and employees are well aware. Policies abound. Several of our institutions have them. Yet, the cultural shift to fill the gap between the policy and the implementation is as yet only a dream, not a reality. In addition, network draws to your attention a Danish study of the performance-related effects of women in the senior levels of the work force.

On a more individual note, and as an inspiration to other women who also seek career and family balance, network interviewed Ms. Patricia Azarias, the Chief of the Auditing Division of the Organization of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). At the current juncture the importance of her function cannot be over emphasized. Hence, it is with pride that we feature her as a senior woman, particularly in the context of the paradigm shift that we seek to better realize a more holistic and balanced approach both within the workplace and between the professional and the personal.

In solidarity,

Aparna Mehrotra

Patricia Azarias



Interview with Patricia Azaria Director of the Audit Division, Office of Internal Oversight Services

1. What interested you about the UN?

I was nine years old when my father first told me about Dag Hammarskjold and the United Nations,

Patricia Azarias (Australian) was appointed Director of the Internal Audit of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) at the United Nations on 11 March 2004. As a young professional, Ms. Azarias worked for UNDP for almost nine years, including three years of field service in Zimbabwe. For personal reasons, she left the UN service and went to do cost-benefit analyses for a regional bank in Saudi Arabia, and returned to her home country, Australia. For 10 years she was the Director of the Public Accounts Committee in the Parliament of New South Wales, serving through two changes of government. There she led a team researching and writing extensive management and financial reviews and assessments of a wide range of government agencies. Later she served as Chief Executive of the Ministry of Infrastructure Management in New South Wales. Ms. Azarias has degrees from Sydney, Oxford and Princeton Universities and her main field of study has been economics. She is married with two children.

and, small as I was, I was sure right away that the United Nations was where I wanted to work. In the United Nations, my father said, people of different nationalities, different races, different religions and different family backgrounds worked harmoniously together to improve the lot of humanity. For an idealistic young person, who came from a very mixed family background, and who wanted to leave the world a better place than she found it, the UN was obviously the only place to spend a life. Of course we all blush when we look back on our youthful enthusiasms, but on the wall of my office right now is a large photo of Dag Hammarskjöld, whose high principles, firmness of purpose, vigorous and efficient action, international convictions and modesty of demeanour still, I believe, have a powerful message for United Nations staff.

2. Were your expectations met?

By definition the auditor sees the least attractive sides of any organization, but it does seem to me that one of the major challenges of the Secretariat is to find a way of putting a greater stress on efficiency, streamlined procedures, much

flatter structures and speed of execution, without sacrificing fairness. I am not advocating ruthlessness. I am advocating a combined effort of the imagination to define a new way of structuring the UN's personnel and administrative framework so that efficiency and clean, modern structures, and, particularly flexible personnel policies, are a major goal and achievement.

Another challenge for the UN is to tell its good stories with panache and conviction. Anyone visiting the field sees inspiring stories: the Military Observers venturing unarmed, two by two, into some of the roughest and most dangerous territory on earth; the election advisers working bravely in countries without water, electricity, refuse collection, telephones, justice systems or books; the child protection officers who reunite thousands of kidnapped child soldiers with their families; the food distributors who save hundreds of thousands from starvation in dusty, dirty and dangerous conditions; the vaccination personnel who venture deep into hostile territory to immunize queues of susceptible children; the teachers, the doctors, the pilots, the administrators, the drivers, the policemen, even, dare I say it, the auditors. These are the people who make the Organization, even in the midst of its present travails, such an enlightening and satisfying place to work. I don't want to sound like Pollyanna, though. The good story is far from being the whole story, as auditors know all too well.

3. What personal and career experiences have influenced your understanding and vision regarding the situation of women and what progress do you feel you have witnessed?

I was an only child, and from the age of 17 I had to support my mother, as well as myself. So actually I was always the breadwinner. From the vantage point of her traditional culture, my mother told me in amazement, when I first started working in UNDP: "Mais tu fais le travail d'un homme! (But you do the work of a man!)" That wasn't exactly true then, and it still isn't. Mostly, it's still easier for men—in meetings, where their voices are often louder and it can be hard for women to interrupt; in the field, where they are still more readily accompanied by spouses than women are; at the senior levels, where they tend to predominate, and indeed dominate; in family life, where they tend, even now, to do fewer domestic

Contents

Letter from the Focal Point for Women 1

Interview with Ms. Patrizia Azaria 1

Congratulations 5

Women, Islam and the theology of power ... 7

Around the UN 8

Gender news 10

Flexibility key to retaining women 11

Women, peace and security 12

In your interest 13

 Reports 13

 SGBs, AI, IC, others 14

News flash 16

Women's health 17

Recommended reading 17

Websites 18

Letters/e-mails from readers 19

tasks than women do; and in their careers, which are less likely to be interrupted by child-related responsibilities. We have advanced from the time I was a P-2, 30 years ago, but not enormously, and there is still a long way to go.

4. As an OIOS auditor how would you assess the current problems of abuse of power, harassment in the workforce and sexual harassment in the UN?

Everyone feels outrage at the more obvious manifestations of gender inequality such as the well-publicized sexual exploitation abuse cases in the field. But the more insidious forms, the nods and winks, the glazing over of the eyes when a woman starts to speak, the axiomatic belief that a woman, particularly a young woman, has nothing worthwhile to say, the slowness in promotion, these are also destructive and have, I venture to say, stung very many women in the Organization, as they did me.

5. What measures would you suggest need to be taken to improve the problems encountered with harassment in the workplace/sexual harassment from lessons learned in your work?

I have often thought that mandatory attendance at gender sensitization courses is a good idea; and longer leave for child-raising. I would also like to see the UN issue clear policies, procedures and guidelines on sexual harassment and on whistle-blowers revealing sexual harassment. These policies should be created by a special working group. They should explicitly prevent any administrative recourse being taken against a complainant until the case is properly investigated and determined. There should also be absolute enforcement of absolutely zero tolerance of infractions; the establishment of specialized counselors in OHRM to help those who feel they may have been victimized by sexual harassment; sexual harassment focal points in OIOS; and a dedicated full-time capacity in OHRM to be responsible for monitoring the incidence of sexual harassment.

6. Do you think women in leadership positions make a difference in the working environment?

I don't think that having women in leadership positions necessarily makes a difference in the

working environment. Women are individuals. Some are warm, consultative and sympathetic; some are tough and uncooperative; some are helpful, some harmful, to other women. There are no rules. In general, though, women have special experience in multi-tasking, and carry a disproportionate burden of care, so chances are that they will be more willing to understand the human condition and its travails and vicissitudes, and that they will then bring that broader sympathy into the workplace. Hopefully, too, younger women will be inspired and encouraged by seeing women achieve senior positions.

7. You are a woman who has risen fast through the ranks, and, surely, not without difficulties. What were the most important factors that allowed you to progress in your career?

The most important factor that allowed me to progress in my career is the quality of my education, which I was lucky enough to finance through scholarships. This has carried me through ups and downs. One of the recommendations I would make to young women is to get the best education they possibly can, even if it means studying at night and on weekends. I would also say that I was able to secure plenty of support from my family. Actually, I've always been pushed pretty hard by my family. Many women don't have that benefit, so I would recommend to them to demand the support they need. You have the same right as any man to a fulfilling career and you need to assert and protect that right.

8. Your working environment is mostly masculine, although there are some senior women. How does this gender imbalance define working relations and how could they be changed to better suit women?

One of the biggest constraints I faced, especially early in my career, is common to many young women, and that is a certain level of politeness, even reticence. It took me time before I went out and asked for things I wanted instead of waiting respectfully for them to be given to me. I missed a lot of opportunities that way. It took me time to learn to interrupt in meetings. It took me time to learn combativeness. Even now I'd rather collaborate than clash. I see with experience how typical that is of women generally. Men tend to be readier

to do battle, although this is changing. Madeleine Albright says that when young women ask her for one piece of advice, she says “don’t be afraid to interrupt”, and up to a point I know just what she means. I would enlarge that. Now, in my fifties, I look back on that diffident young staff member of 30 years ago and would like to tell her: “Don’t be afraid of anything. Go for it. Do it. Say it. Ask for it. Take it. Nothing is really stopping you.”

9. Why do women seem to have weaker networks compared to the old boys’ networks?

Actually, at very senior levels of OIOS there’s an excellent representation of women. But that’s obviously not true in the Organization as a whole. How does it affect working relationships? Well, it’s a truism that people tend to recruit and promote people like themselves, and, if most recruiters and promoters are men, this can easily perpetuate gender imbalance and frustrate and incense women. Given that, do we do anything to ensure a gender balance among programme consulting officers (PCOs)? Can we? It may not be enough simply to have a women’s representative on Review Boards.

One thing I would very much like is for the UN to establish a prestigious UN Award for Women in Public Service, with gold, silver and bronze medals for senior, mid-career and junior women. Countries would be invited to submit nominations, there would be regional heats, and the finalists would all be invited to a big Award dinner in New York, with press and other media. The publicity gained by the award winners in their home countries could galvanize women and encourage them to enter public service. The UN would look good, at very little cost. And the contacts these women would establish would be fantastic, just as good as, or even better than, any old boys’ network.

10. What were the most important professional and personal decisions you had to make to balance work and personal commitments?

It has been very difficult for me to balance work and family. In UNDP, where I started my career, this was particularly hard because mobility is a way of life and not many husbands at that time were willing to follow their wives around the world. Actually I ended up having to choose between career and family and this led to the most

painful decision of my life, which was to walk away from the career I loved and had wanted to do since I was a little girl. There was no spousal employment programme then. It’s not easy. Every woman has to find her own solution. There may be scope to enlarge and enhance the spousal employment programme, or to consider, as some diplomatic, consular or trade services already have in place, the simultaneous employment of husband and wife in the same duty station, even if one has a reporting relation to the other. I have seen this working very well in actual practice in an international public service of a European country, and the women involved went on to brilliant careers, made possible because their service allowed their husbands to report to them in the same office. I know how easy it would be to abuse, I know it’s conflict of interest, I know it’s heresy, but I’ve seen it working well. If we want mobility, and we want to encourage women, we have to venture along these paths and devise ways of mitigating the risks.

11. Can you share with network the personal philosophy which has most contributed to your career, and that which has guided you personally in difficult moments?

In a women’s publication, it sounds bizarre to say that the personal philosophy which has guided me throughout my life is the idea of the brotherhood of man! But that’s what the language forces us into, and that’s probably my most profound philosophy. Too many people are still too ready to dehumanize another tribe, another race, another religion, another colour. In the end everyone pretty much wants the same thing—a decent family life, a better future for their children, and good health. Economists tell us that the most efficient outcome is achieved when there is freely allowed cooperation, and that’s true outside economics too. I believe in collaboration rather than antagonism. It saves time and gets better results.

I also strongly believe in personal responsibility, transparency and accountability. Right now I am researching a book called “The heads that didn’t roll: the death of accountability”, which looks at a number of case studies of publicly employed people, of all levels, who either caused losses of money or life, or under whose watch

such losses occurred. I look at what happened to those people—Did they lose their jobs? Were they demoted? Did they pay any price at all? And the results are sobering.

Lastly, I am passionate about preserving the gains that women have so painfully made over the last 30 years or so. This is one area where I would go out, do battle and defend territory! We've come only part of the way—let's go on fighting for the rest!

Congratulations to ...

UN-related

- Ms. **Barbara Masciangelo** (OLA) for being elected as the new President of the **Group on Equal Rights for Women** (GERWUN) and Ms. **Sylvie Jacque** (OLA) as Vice-President, on 25 May 2005.
- Ms. **Inga-Britt Ahlenius** (Sweden) for her appointment as Under-Secretary-General for **Internal Oversight Services** (OIOS) for a five-year non-renewable term. Ms. Ahlenius was previously Auditor General of Kosovo, and before that was Auditor General of Sweden. She took over her new assignment on 18 July 2005. She replaced Dilep Nair, whose term expired.
- Ms. **Deborah Landey** (Canada) for her appointment as the new Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS programme on 11 May 2005. Ms. Landey first joined the UN in 1978 and has wide UN experience. She last served as UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines. As Deputy, Ms. Landey will help lead the senior UNAIDS management while her experience at the country level will be of prime importance to the agency in strengthening UN coordination.

UN bodies

- Ms. **Amina Mohamed** (Kenya) who was elected on 15 February 2005 as the first woman to chair the General Council of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the organization's highest decision-making body between biannual ministerial confer-

ences. At the time of her appointment, she was Kenya's Ambassador to Geneva and to the World Trade Organization.

- Ms. **Ann Veneman** (U.S.) who took office as the new Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on 1 May 2005. She replaced Ms. Carol Bellamy. Ms. Veneman is a lawyer by profession and much of her career has been focused on child nutrition, public health and alleviating hunger. At the time of her appointment, Ms. Veneman was serving as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Five experts who were appointed to monitor the Security Council arms embargo against the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 19 May 2005. Arms trafficking expert Ms. **Kathi Lynn Austin** (U.S.) was the only woman named among the five experts.
- Judge **Arlette Ramaroson** (Madagascar) for her election as Vice-President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. She succeeded Judge Andresia Vaz (Senegal) who did not seek re-election. Prior to joining the ICTR, Ms. Ramaroson was the President of the Criminal Division of the Court of Appeal and Acting President of the Supreme Court Criminal Division of Madagascar.

Others

- The **United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP) named seven leaders in the field of the environment as **Champions of the Earth** for "setting an example for the world to follow" on 12 April 2005. One woman, Ms. **Sheila Watt-Cloutier** (Canada), President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, was among the seven recipients. She received the award for her "contributions in addressing global warming" and in articulating her people's concerns "in the face of the devastating effects of climate change and its relentless assault on Inuit traditional life".
- Ms. **Marguerita Barankitse** (Burundi) who was awarded the 2005 Nansen Refugee

Award on 29 April 2005. The award is given annually to individuals or organizations that have distinguished themselves in work on behalf of refugees. Ms. Barankitse has for the last 12 years opened her house and heart to more than 10,000 children affected by Burundi's civil war and other conflicts in the region, providing them with safety, love and the chance of a better future. She is also the founder of a non-governmental organization Maison Shalom (House of Peace).

- The yearly **UN Population Award** given to individuals and institutions for outstanding work in population and improving the health and welfare of individuals was awarded on 9 June 2005, to the following recipients:
 - Ms. **Mercedes Concepcion** (Philippines), a leading demographer;
 - **Asociacion Pro-bienestar de la Familia de Guatemala** (APROFAM ONG), the largest non-for-profit, non-denominational organization providing health education, care and counseling to Guatemalan families.
- The **2005 UNESCO Literacy prizes** were awarded on 27 June 2005 to the **AULA Cultural Association**, a neighbourhood movement in Palma de Mallorca, who paves the way for education activities tailored to suit a range of social groups, particularly women, immigrants from Africa and south and east Europe winners; **GOAL Sudan** which was selected for its women's literacy programme in displaced communities in Sudan; and the **Associacao PROGRESSO** which has designed and implemented a literacy programme aimed at empowering communities, structures and networks in the provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado.

In Government

- Ms. **Massouma al-Mubarak**, the **first woman Kuwaiti cabinet minister** was sworn in amid noisy protests from conservative politicians on 20 June 2006. She said that her appointment was a great day for Kuwaiti women who have struggled and persevered persistently to gain their full political rights.

Ms. al-Mubarak was named minister of planning and administrative development a month after Kuwait's parliament gave women the right to vote and participate in elections for the first time.

- Ms. **Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka** who was named **Deputy President of South Africa**, on 23 June 2005. This appointment makes Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka the highest female public official in her country. She was previously the Minister for Minerals and Energy.

Farewell to

- Ms. **Catherine Bertini** (U.S.) who stepped down as **Under-Secretary-General for Management** on 29 April 2005. Ms. Bertini will continue her active involvement in supporting global girls' education. She will also maintain her role as Chair of the UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition. Ms. Bertini was replaced by Mr. **Christopher Burnham** (U.S.).
- Ms. **Carol Bellamy** (U.S.) who retired as the fourth Executive Director of UNICEF on 29 April 2005. Ms. Bellamy brought a new holistic approach to children's health, including a focus on children's and women's rights and broadening reproductive care. Ms. Bellamy succeeded in helping reduce child-mortality rates and opening access to education, especially for girls. Ms. Bellamy was replaced by Ms. Ann M. Veneman (U.S.).
- Sir **Kieran Prendergast** (UK) retired as **Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs** (DPA) at the end of June 2005. Sir Kieran will remain on staff until the end of the year at the Secretary-General's request to write a report drawing on his experience at DPA and recommending how the UN can best fulfil its responsibilities in the areas of mediation support and conflict resolution. Sir Kieran was replaced by Mr. **Ibrahim A. Gambari** (Nigeria).

Women, Islam and the theology of power

by Nadia Nader, Intern OSAGI¹

Nadia Nader is a Ph.D. student in the Department of History at University of California at Santa Barbara. She holds a B.A. in English literature from Alexandria University in Egypt, and a M.A. in Religious Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Nadia is focusing on Islamic legal history, Islamic family law reform and human rights in an Islamic context.

After the death of the prophet Muhammad, the early Muslim community was inflicted with an unrelenting identity crisis that led to an era of vicious struggle for political power. This early formative period of the Islamic past was a period of protracted civil strife that ushered in the emergence of two equally powerful “authoritative” political parties: the *Sunni* and the *Shi’a*, which tried to legitimize their claims to succession to power merely on a theological basis. One would assume that in the midst of that entire power struggle, women had hardly any voice; but the Islamic past is always surprising.

At the time of the death of the prophet, his widow *A’isha* was one of the most knowledgeable figures in Islamic law, prophetic traditions and rituals and it was reported that the prophet had advised his followers to learn from her. After his death, *A’isha* led armed troops against *Ali Bin Abi Talib*, the 4th Caliph. This is known as the Battle of Camel and is also regarded in Islamic history as the first civil war that resulted in an ongoing political conflict between the *Sunni* and the *Shi’a* sects. *A’isha* was defeated, captured and forced to retire from any further political involvement. She remained the rest of her life in seclusion, until she died at the age of 62.

While Muslim feminists use *A’isha’s* story to argue that women could certainly participate in politics and aspire to political power, they are faced with significant resistance by conservative male authorities who use that same story to deprive women from the mere aspiration of becoming part of the Muslim religious, political and economic decision-making realms.

Sunni and *Shi’a* sects of Islam have very dissimilar views on *A’isha’s* character; however, they both perceive her as an imperative part in the

destruction of the Muslim community, as she is blamed for the first historical civil war. Her failure is taught as a lesson for Muslim women to abstain from participating in the political domain. Unfortunately, the progress of the contemporary scene is illusory. The statistics on Muslim women in decision-making positions are bleak. Currently, there is not one independent Muslim woman who is an authoritative voice on shaping Islamic theology and/or law in the contemporary Muslim world. Women are, consequently, completely absent from the pertinent discourse of shaping Islamic theological thought, and from the institutions of power in the Islamic world.

While some male scholars argue that changing the demographic of the profession of Islamic jurisprudence will devalue the whole profession and will undermine the validity of these institutions, these conservative scholars of Islamic law are facing a serious epistemological crisis due to the absence of women scholars from Islamic legal, theological and historical discourses. This absence has recently created an intellectual crisis for scholars who are advocating for democracy, law reform and for the incorporation of human rights in the legal/theological discourse. Women scholars have also started to analyse the historical absence of women critically, which has created a serious schism between Muslim women and Muslim men over questions of legitimacy/authority.

How, then, can we develop a consistent mechanism of incorporating erudite qualified women into the Islamic institutions of power, and who qualifies to decide who is qualified? First, we need a sincere, yet critical evaluation of the crisis of the non-evolution of Islamic law, which is possible through the assessment of the historical development of Islamic legal thought. It is essential to look at the origins and the evolution of the institutions of power, and it is also necessary to theorize and historicize the concept of power in Islamic thought. Muslims ought to overcome the apprehension that their collective communal identity will be threatened by a critical evaluation of their past. Second, Muslim male jurists must include women in the mainstream profession of Islamic jurisprudence to reflect women’s realities. Women should become an integral part of the entire theological/legal discourse since these discourses directly influence their sociological, eco-

nomical and political agencies and their patterns of behaviour. Third, Muslim women must learn Islamic theology and jurisprudence in order to acquire and sharpen the skills required by these fields. In order for women to shape legal thought and implement the law in an institutional fashion, they need to be part of the decision-making process and be given a genuine voice.

Here we have two challenges that face two categories of women: the qualified and the non-qualified. While many Muslim women are qualified to be shaping legal/theological/political discourse, they are usually not given the chance because of the mere fact that they are women. The debate is about whether women are allowed to participate in the first place, and whether this participation will devalue the profession because women are emotional, weak and partial and cannot think properly or make right decisions. The other more severe challenge is that many women cannot complete the same educational courses that men do to become qualified as male authorities in many countries still have the right to determine what is inappropriate for women to learn.

The paucity of qualified women in the upper echelons of religious decision-making process is not a phenomenon exclusive of Islam but of all monotheistic religions. This is a serious burden on women, who represent more than 50 per cent of the world's population. Women need to empower themselves and others to become part of the hierarchal pyramid of power. It must be noted that this paucity is not unique to the Muslim religion but to most religions. Examples of disfranchisement of women are reflected in most areas of society around the world, including politics, government, sciences, the workplace, the home among others.

The process of inclusion of women in shaping Islamic jurisprudence, including the recognition that women's rights are part and parcel of human rights, will be a very lengthy and uphill one. In undertaking this challenge, Muslim women need to be mindful of their own objectives, aspirations and methodologies since in the process of challenging the authoritative, one is in danger of becoming an authoritarian oneself. For Islamic thought and practice to move out of its non-evolutionary stage, a process of inclusiveness of women is essential.

Please refer to the following websites if you need more information on Islamic law and Women:

<http://www.law.emory.edu/IFL/>

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/law.htm>

<http://www.people.virginia.edu/~aas/article/article1.htm>: Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina's article: Woman Half-the-Man? Crisis of Male Epistemology in Islamic Jurisprudence.

¹To recognize interns and their contribution to the work of the Office of the Focal Point for Women **network** offers them the opportunity to publish articles in their field of expertise. The views represented in the article are solely those of Ms. Nader.

Around the UN

On 7 April 2005 the United Nations system devoted **World Health Day** to the hundreds of millions of women and children who have no access to potentially life-saving care. With more than half a million women dying in pregnancy or childbirth each year and nearly 11 million children succumbing annually before their fifth birthday, the United Nations has acknowledged that this is a public health crisis and a moral outrage.

- The United Nations **Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)**, in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), convened an expert group meeting on *Violence against women: a statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches for overcoming them* in Geneva, from 11 to 14 April 2005 (<http://www.un.org/women/watch/daw/egm/vaw-stat-2005/index.html>).
- A new women's initiative on water entitled **"Women leaders for water, sanitation and hygiene for all (WASH)"** was launched on 22 April 2005, during a side event during the *Commission on Sustainable Development*, to highlight how far more severely affected women are than men by inadequate provision of water and health care; and to encourage

world leaders to act in more gender-conscious ways to ensure access to safe water and sanitation.

- The **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministerial Meeting on the Advancement of Women** took place in Putrajaya, Malaysia, from 10 to 11 May 2005. The message of Secretary-General Kofi Annan included a clear reference to the fact that no tool for development was more effective than the empowerment of women and no other policy was as powerful as increasing the chances of education for the next generation. The promotion of gender equality is not only the responsibility of women, it is everybody's responsibility. In order to change the historical legacy that puts women at a disadvantage in most societies, targeted action in almost every private and public area must be taken.
- The **Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)**, in collaboration with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, convened an expert group meeting on “**Good practices in combating and eliminating violence against women**” in Vienna, Austria, from 17 to 20 May 2005 (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw-gp-2005/index.html>).
- In preparation for the **September Summit** of 2005, the Deputy Secretary-General **Louise Frechette** unveiled on 17 May 2005 a series of reforms, undertaken in response to criticisms of UN management, contained in the Secretary-General's report “In larger freedom” which deals with progress towards achieving a set of socio-economic targets as well as UN change, including the necessity to develop a formal induction programme to provide in-depth training for managers in the areas of sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeeping staff; the creation of code of conduct enforcement units in all peacekeeping missions; a more robust approach to ensure that once senior officials were appointed they were briefed on the broader system of UN staff rules, regulations, codes of conduct and managerial systems; and last but not least the formulation and implementation of a robust new whistleblower policy for staff.
- The **Fourth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** took place at United Nations Headquarters, from 16 to 27 May 2005. The special theme for this session was the Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples with a focus on Goal 1 to eradicate poverty and extreme hunger and Goal 2 to achieve universal primary education. The Forum brought together over 1,500 participants from more than 500 indigenous groups worldwide (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/doc_fourth_4session.htm).
- The theme of the **World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought** celebrated on 8 June 2005 was “**Women and Desertification**”. Women living in dry lands tend to rank among the poorest of the poor. Although women account for approximately 70 per cent of the agricultural labour force and produce 60 to 80 per cent of the food, they are clearly just beginning to gain access to land ownership and to take part in decision-making (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/doc_fourth_4session.htm).
- The **UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)** co-hosted an event on 10 June 2005, in light of the International Year of Microcredit 2005, together with the Financial Women's Association, Women Advancing Microfinance, Women's Association of Venture Equity, Women's Bond Club of New York and 85 Broads to discuss how the growing microfinance sector can benefit from the expertise of Wall Street. Women on Wall Street are well positioned to champion change in this industry and allow for wealth creation by women living in poverty around the world today. Microfinance benefits women in particular as women represent 70 per cent of the world's poor people.
- The **World Population Day** was celebrated on 11 July 2005. Speakers discussed the need for equality between men and women which

constituted one of the guiding principles inscribed in the UN Charter; and its implementation which was central to global efforts to free people from fear and want. Global and national debates on human rights and human development were focusing on issues of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender news

- Mr. **Pascal Lamy**, who will become Director-General of the **World Trade Organization** (WTO) on 1 September 2005, broke with tradition on 5 July 2005 calling for applications on the WTO website for the four Deputy-Director posts. Previously the posts were filled only through behind-the-scenes negotiations. The announcement suggested that at least one woman would be selected, as it promised to ensure "adequate gender balance" in an organization that has been traditionally male-dominated.
- **The pace of progress for women in the sciences was slow** reported an article of **The New York Times** of 15 April 2005. Even as the number of women earning Ph.D.'s in science at U.S. universities had increased substantially to about 50 per cent of the biology doctorates, and 33 per cent of chemistry, the science and engineering faculties of elite research universities remained overwhelmingly male, with the majority of women clustered at the junior faculty ranks. At Harvard, the men to women ratio of those with tenure stands at 149:13. The article also noted that the faculties of most elite institutions are not only mostly male but are also mostly white. Some universities have also taken note of the disadvantages that women face in negotiating salaries, laboratory space and money for research, as well as the importance of building a reputation by publishing in high profile academic journals and becoming speakers and they are bringing back senior academics to coach them. Princeton president, Ms. Shirley M. Tilghman, a molecular biologist and mother of two, said that universities should do a great deal more to create environments that legitimize the choice to be a scientist while also having a family by creating friendly work-life environments.
- On 17 May 2005 **Harvard University** announced that it will spend \$50 million on women scientists over the next decade. Harvard's president had sparked anger by questioning their aptitude.
- **The New York Times** of 14 June 2005 reported that hundreds of women staged an **unauthorized demonstration in Tehran**, Iran, on 13 June 2005 protesting sex discrimination under Iran's Islamic leadership, days ahead of the 17 June presidential election. The protest was the first public display of dissent by women since the 1979 revolution, when the new leadership enforced obligatory veiling.
- The UNICEF report "**Suffering in silence: a study of sexual and gender-based violence**" in Pabbo IPD Camp, released on 15 June 2005, has identified rape, the sexual abuse of children and physical assault as constituting the most common forms of sexual violence inside the internally displaced persons camp, the largest and one of the oldest such settlements in northern Uganda's conflict-affected districts. The report stated that girls aged 13-17 are among the most vulnerable to sexual violence, followed by women aged 19-36 and children aged 4 to 9. Sexual violence is a highly traumatic event that impacts every aspect of the victims' life. Girls and women who have been raped are particularly vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections and other physical and mental illnesses, the report stated. Key recommendations for intervention include strengthening district policies on sexual assault and gender issues, improving the quality of existing health and counselling services for survivors of abuse, and increasing efforts to promote school attendance and education in the camp (www.unicef.org/media/media_27378.html).
- The **Kuwait Parliament** voted, on 16 June 2005, an amendment to the Kuwait's electoral law granting women the right to vote

and run for parliament for the first time. It was passed by 35 votes for, 23 against, with one abstention. In 1999, a decree was issued giving women full political rights. The change in the law had previously been blocked by a majority of tribal and Islamist members of parliament arguing that Islamic law prohibited women from positions of leadership. The amendment requires women voters and candidates to abide by Islamic law (BBC 16-5-05/UN).

Flexibility key to retaining women

Summary of an article written by

Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Carolyn Buck Luce,
9 May 2005²

In the workplace, employers need to take into account the need for women to take a temporary “off ramp” from their careers, because organizations **can no longer pretend that treating women as “men in skirts” will fix their retention problems.** Like it or not, large numbers of highly qualified, committed women need to take time out. Below are some of the key elements in retaining qualified women:

Provide flexibility in the day. Some women don’t require reduced work hours; they merely need flexibility in when, where and how they do their work. Someone caring for an invalid or a fragile elderly person may likewise have many hours of potentially productive time in a day yet not be able to stray far from home.

Almost 64 per cent of the women surveyed in a study in the United States cite flexible work arrangements as being either extremely or very important to them, and, by a considerable margin, **highly qualified women find flexibility more important than compensation; only 42 per cent say that “earning a lot of money” is an important motivator.**

Provide flexibility in the arc of a career. Flexibility is needed throughout the entire arc of a career not to lose twice as many women as men in the middle reaches of career lad-

ders. **One way to retain women can be done by telecommuting or short stints in the office since many of these talented women will eventually return to full-time employment.**

Remove the stigma. Making flexible arrangements succeed over the long term is hard work. It means **crafting an imaginative set of policies, but, even more important, it means eliminating the stigma that is often attached to such non-standard work arrangements.** As many as 35 per cent of the women surveyed report that their organizations’ cultures effectively penalize people who take advantage of work-life policies. Telecommuting appears to be most stigmatized (30 per cent), followed by job sharing and part-time work, and flexible work arrangements (21 per cent). Parental leave policies get more respect although 19 per cent of women report cultural or attitudinal barriers to taking the time off. In environments where flexible work arrangements are tacitly deemed illegitimate, many women would rather resign than request them. However, *men encounter even more stigma if they want to use work-life flexible policies.* **Transformation of the corporate culture seems to be a prerequisite for success on the work-life front.**

Stop burning bridges. Only 5 per cent of highly qualified women looking for on-ramps are interested in rejoining the companies they left. In business sectors, that percentage is zero. If ever there was a danger signal for corporations, this is it.

The finding implies that the vast majority of off-ramped women, at the moment they left their careers, felt ill-used—or at least underutilized and unappreciated—by their employers. It’s understandable for managers to assume that women leave mainly for “pull” reasons and that there’s no point in trying to keep them. Indeed, at times family overload and the traditional division of labour place unmanageable demands on a working woman. **Most off-ramping decisions are conditioned by policies, practices, and attitudes at work. Recognition, flexibility, and the opportunity**

to telecommute—especially when endorsed by the corporate culture—can make a huge difference.

Provide outlets for altruism. Imaginative attachment policies notwithstanding, some women have no interest in returning to their old organizations because their desire to work in their former field has waned. The data suggest that fully 52 per cent of women with MBAs in the business sector cite **the fact that they do not find their careers “either satisfying or enjoyable” as an important reason for why they left work.** Perhaps not surprisingly, then, a majority (54 per cent) of the women looking for on-ramps want to change their profession or field. And in most of those cases, it's a woman who formerly worked in the corporate sphere hoping to move into the not-for-profit sector.

Employers would be well advised to recognize and harness the altruism of these women. Supporting female professionals in their advocacy and public service efforts serves to win their energy and loyalty. Companies may also be able to redirect women's desire to give back to the community by asking them to become involved in mentoring and formal women's networks within the company.

Nurture ambition. Finally, if women are to sustain their passion for work and their competitive edge—whether or not they take formal time out—they must keep ambition alive. There is an **urgent need to implement mentoring and networking programmes that help women expand and sustain their professional aspirations by developing “old girls networks” that build skills, contacts, and confidence.** They link women to inside power brokers and to outside business players and effectively inculcate those precious rainmaking skills. But they also play **another, critical role. They provide the infrastructure within which women can earn recognition, as well as a safe platform from which to blow one's own horn without being perceived as too pushy.**

²Excerpted from “Off-Ramps and On-Ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success,” *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 83, No. 3, March 2005, written by Sylvia Ann Hewlett (cwlp@centerforwork-lifepolicy.org), founder and president of the Center for Work-Life Policy, a New York-based not-for-profit organization together with Carolyn Buck Luce (carolyn.buck-luce@ey.com) who is the global managing partner for Ernst & Young's health sciences industry practice in New York, and co-chair of the Center for Work-Life Policy's Hidden Brain Drain task force.

Women, peace and security

- The report on **sexual exploitation occurring in peacekeeping missions (A/59/710)** prepared by the Secretary-General's Adviser on this issue, H.R.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein recommended that the UN establish **Personnel Conduct Units** in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) at the UN Headquarters and in seven existing missions. The Unit would ensure the provision of training on UN standards of conduct including specific training on sexual exploitation and abuse. In the field, the Units would establish mechanisms to receive complaints of misconduct, review and verify facts, forward allegations of misconduct and liaise with Headquarters on follow-up investigations. This recommendation was approved on 10 May 2005 and additional funding to hire the extra employees has been requested.
- The number of **allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation** made by and about UN personnel in 2004 as reported in document A/59/782 of 6 May 2005 was more than double the number reported in 2003. Allegations ranged from inappropriate verbal conduct to sexual assault and rape, as reported from all United Nations entities other than the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).
- The **Security Council** held its first ever public meeting on 31 May 2005, devoted exclusively to sexual exploitation and abuse. In a Presidential Statement, the Council condemned all acts of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by peacekeepers and wel-

comed the report on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations Peacekeeping Personnel (A/59/710), prepared by the Secretary-General's Adviser on this issue, H.R.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein and the report of the resumed session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping (A/59/19/Add.1). **The Council urged the Secretary-General and Troop Contributing Countries to implement** the recommendations of the Special Committee and called upon the Secretary-General to include, in his regular reporting of peacekeeping missions, **a summary of the preventative measures taken to implement a zero-tolerance policy and of the outcome of actions taken against personnel found culpable of sexual exploitation and abuse.** In June 2005, the General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/59/300) on "Comprehensive review on a strategy to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peacekeeping operations," which also stressed the need to implement fully the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping (www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/ctte/SEA.htm and <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/495/13/PDF/N0449513.pdf?OpenElement>).

- **The International Criminal Court's (ICC) investigation into war crimes in Sudan's Darfur** region brings a glimmer of hope to a human catastrophe, as per the mandate given by the Security Council after review of the report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur pursuant to Security Council resolution 1564 of 18 September 2004, completed in Geneva on 25 January 2005. The ICC now has a chance to prosecute those responsible for mass murder and rape.
- The **General Assembly** approved on 23 June 2005 a record-setting \$3.2 billion peacekeeping budget for the UN's 14 ongoing missions in 2005-2006. The Assembly adopted a 22-part consensus resolution seeking to elaborate a "coherent and focused" approach for peacekeeping management. The Assembly also emphasized **the need to develop a comprehensive, well defined and coherent policy**

to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse in all UN activities and stated that the implementation of a zero-tolerance policy and procedures towards acts of sexual exploitation and abuse should be clearly defined as a core management function, also addressing clear lines of responsibility and accountability relating to non-enforcement of codes of conduct, policies and preventive measures.

In your interest

Reports

- **The International Labour Office (ILO)** released a new report entitled "A global alliance against forced labour" (Note 1) on 11 May 2005. The report is the most comprehensive analysis ever undertaken by an inter-governmental organization of the facts and underlying causes of contemporary forced labour. The report states, among other things, **that nearly 10 million people are exploited through forced labour in the private economy, out of which a minimum of 2.4 million are victims of human trafficking; that forced labour is a major global problem which is present in all regions and in all types of economies.** Forced economic exploitation exists in sectors such as agriculture, construction, brick-making and informal sweatshops manufacturing, and is more or less evenly divided between the sexes. However, forced commercial sexual exploitation entraps almost entirely women and girls (www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/2005/22.htm).
- **Save the Children** issued its **State of the World's Mothers 2005** report on 11 May 2005. The report states that nearly **58 million girls are not attending school** and examines ways that investing in girls' education can benefit present and future generations of children, and society as a whole. It points to effective, affordable programmes and policies that are working, even in the world's poorest countries. The report finds that no matter what the economic or cultural challenges, there is a strategy that can work to get girls into school and help them stay there. It shows

how schooling girls benefits individuals and has a dramatic ripple effect that can change the course of a nation. When they grow up, educated girls are more likely to postpone marriage and childbirth, have fewer children, have the resources to ensure their children's health and education, and contribute to the improvement of society through their involvement in civic groups and political decision-making (www.savethechildren.org/mothers/report_2005/index.asp).

- **UNICEF** presented, on 11 May 2005, its report **An Arab world fit for children** prepared at the request of the Arab League. The milestone review of progress achieved and pending challenges facing the children and young people living in Arab countries stresses the need for increased investment in children, and reflects on priority areas for the development and implementation of the 2004-2015 Arab Plan of Action for Children, issued by the Arab Summit last year in Tunis, Tunisia. Protection measures in the Arab world need to be strengthened as children continue to face other forms of violence such as abuse, sexual exploitation and traditional harmful practices such as early marriage and honour killings (www.unicef.org).
- **A/60/62-E/2005/10** attaching the report prepared by UNIFEM on "Organizational assessment: UNIFEM past, present and future" of 1 December 2004.

Secretary-General's Bulletins, Administrative Instructions, Information Circulars and others

- **ST/SGB/2005/12 of 29 April 2005**—established the organizational structure of the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).
 - **ST/SGB/2005/11 of 29 April 2005**—established the organizational structure of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).
 - **ST/SGB/2005/9 of 2 May 2005**—established the organizational structure of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM).
 - In a **Note to Staff of 6 May 2005** staff members were informed of the establishment of two committees—along with the creation of the Management Performance Board—that will reinforce the capacity, at the highest level in the Organization, to provide the necessary level of strategic direction and help build a stronger culture of performance and accountability, as follows:
 - **Policy Committee:** will focus on issues requiring strategic guidance and decisions, as well as identify emerging issues;
 - **Management Committee:** will deal with internal reform and management-related issues.
 - **Management Performance Board:** will monitor and analyse the performance of managers to ensure that they are properly undertaking the responsibilities entrusted to them.
- The existing **Senior Management Group** will continue to meet every two weeks to discuss experiences among the wider group of senior management, exchange information and raise and provide guidance on important, cross-cutting issues.
- **ST/AI/2005/3 of 6 May 2005**—established the requirements for granting of sick leave, including how sick leave for staff members on an appointment of limited duration under the 300 series of Staff Rules shall be governed by the relevant provisions of the Administration Instruction governing appointments of limited duration. Topics discussed:
 - Certification of sick leave
 - Exhaustion of sick leave entitlement
 - Combination of sick leave on half pay with annual leave or half-time duty
 - Effect of sick leave on entitlements other than annual leave
 - Sick leave within a period of annual leave
 - Extension of fixed-term appointments for utilization of sick leave entitlement.
 - **ST/AI/2005/2 of 6 May 2005**—established requirements for granting of family leave, maternity leave and paternity leave, as follows:

- Family leave
 - Family leave under the uncertified sick leave entitlement
 - Adoption leave
 - Special leave without pay
 - Parental leave as special leave without pay under staff rule 105.2 for a newly born or adopted child
 - Special leave in cases of death or emergency
 - Maternity leave
 - Pre-delivery leave
 - Post-delivery leave
 - Relationship of maternity leave to other entitlement
 - Sick leave and annual leave
 - Extension of fixed-term appointments for utilization of maternity leave entitlement
 - Paternity leave
 - Paternity leave requests
 - Relationship of paternity leave to other entitlements
 - Sick leave and annual leave
 - Extension of fixed-term appointments for utilization of paternity leave entitlement.
- Further to the introduction of the **new mobility policy** which came into effect in May 2002, as an integral part of the Staff Selection System, an information campaign aimed at making staff better aware of the policy and its implications for their careers was launched by the Office of Human Resources on 11 May 2005 (for more information refer to ST/SGB/2002/5 and ST/AI/2002/4). The campaign will include a series of meetings organized at all duty stations to provide information and answer questions. Outlined below are some highlights of the types of support OHRM will continue to make available to staff to implement the policy:
 - **Post occupancy limits:** a five-year post occupancy limit has been set for 100 series staff from G-5 to P-5 and a six-year limit for D-1 and D-2 level staff;
 - **Voluntary lateral reassignment exercises:** OHRM intends to conduct several pilot lateral reassignment exercises prior to 2007.
- Voluntary Reassignment Programmes, now available only to P-2 staff, will be expanded and opened up to staff from G-5 to G-7 and P-3 to P-5 starting in the fall of 2005;
- **Training programmes, information sessions and workshops:** career support workshops for staff and managers are being introduced at all duty stations, in addition to a wide selection of staff development programmes to upgrade skills and build competencies;
 - **Career Resources Centres:** are expected to be opened in most duty stations by the end of the year;
 - **Generic Job Profiles (GJPs):** are classified standard job descriptions that encompass a large group of related jobs which are similar in terms of duties and responsibilities, education, work experience, technical skills and essential core competencies;
 - **E-PAS:** revised e-PAS includes a career development goal, a learning goal and a means of expressing interest in mission assignments;
 - **Knowledge management:** takes into account the need to preserve institutional memory and maintain adequate continuity and quality of service. Thus, mobility will be implemented in a gradual, phased manner, one level at a time.
- **ST/SGB/2005/15 of 24 May 2005**—promulgated a reviewed mandate of the Publications Board, for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the publishing activities. The Publications Board reviews publications policy and provides common standards and policies for all traditional, electronic and Internet publication activities, in line with the objectives of the Secretariat and the central policy direction provided by the Steering Committee on Reform and Management.
 - **ST/IC/2005/30 of 15 June 2005**—**Outsourcing and impact on staff.** Heads of departments and offices were reminded that where outsourcing is considered they must comply with all the conditions and requirements specified by the General Assembly in a number of resolutions, the latest being 59/289, including

the need to achieve cost savings, to respect the international character of the Organization and to avoid possible negative impact on staff.

- **ST/AI/2005/9 of 13 July 2005**—Amendment to ST/AI/2002/4, Staff selection system. The following text is added to section 3.2:
 - (h) Movement of staff previously appointed under the 100 series in accordance with staff rules 104.15 who have agreed to participate in **voluntary reassignment programmes**. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management shall decide on the reassignment of each staff member, without reference to a central review body. The programmes, aiming to stimulate mobility of staff, are strictly voluntary. Such movement shall be limited to incumbents of posts approved for inclusion in a voluntary lateral reassignment programme and shall not affect the application of the normal rules governing promotion or selection of staff for vacant post.
- **ST/IC/2005/38 of 29 July 2005**—United Nations sabbatical leave programme for 2006 invites staff to apply for the sabbatical leave programme in 2006, in accordance with the provisions ST/AI/2000/4 of 5 April 2000.

News flash

- Following the horrors of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, **women in Sri Lanka are beginning to learn how to swim**. Many lives of women and children would have been saved if they had only known how to swim. Generally, women do not bathe in the sea. Olympic Swimmer Julian Bolling, who is running the Swim Lanka project, said on 6 May 2005 that this was good timing to start changing attitudes and giving children and women the chance to acquire swimming skills. Children in particular have been mentally scarred by the tsunami and have become terrified of water and the sea.
- A South African **Study of Female Homicide** prepared by the Medical Research Council

with data collected in 1999 by the University of Cape Town and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, released on 25 May 2005, states **that a woman is killed every six hours in South Africa by her partner and less than 40 per cent of the homicides leads to convictions**. The killing of women by intimate partners (also known as intimate female homicide or intimate femicide) is the most extreme form and consequence of violence against women (www.mrc.ac.za/policybriefs/woman.pdf).

- The leaders of the Church of England voted, on 12 July 2005 41 to 6 in favour of the process for removing the legal obstacles **to the ordination of women in the episcopate**. This would bring the Church of England into line with the Episcopal Church in the United States and 13 others among the 38 member churches of the Anglican Community.
- The meeting of **Organization and Institutional Gender Information Network (ORIGIN)** took place in Washington, D.C., from 15 to 17 June 2005. Main topics of discussion where the first 10 years of ORIGIN and milestones, lessons learned and making a difference in their organizations. Further, discussions continued on the next 10 years and the strategic context. Small group workshops worked on:
 - Vision and purpose
 - Governance and Membership
 - Focus on gender and diversity
 - E-ORIGIN and website.
- The **Danish Minister for Gender Equality** commissioned a study “*Do women in top management affect firm performance*”. The study surveyed about 2,500 Danish firms and analysed whether women on boards of directors and women on executive boards have a significantly positive effect on firm performance measured by alternative performance measures. It also examined the relationship between board diversity and firm performance for the 2,500 largest Danish firms during 1992-2001. The study concluded that results depended both on the measure of performance and the measure of the proportion of women in management. The effect

on firms' performance of a higher representation of females in top management varied from none to positive. Also, positive performance effects by female managers were strongly correlated with university degrees. Female CEOs who did not hold higher degrees had a much smaller or insignificant effect on firm performance (<ftp://ftp.iza.org/dps/dp1708.pdf>).

Women's health

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** received a \$7 million grant on 22 June 2005 from the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** to accelerate the development and introduction of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines to protect against cervical cancer. HPV is the world's most common sexually transmitted viruses and infects about 70 per cent of sexually active adult populations.
- The following tests were recommended for women (U.S. magazine *More* of July/August 2005):
 - Blood-pressure measurement: all women over 18 years old.
 - Pap smear: the newest guidelines suggest that women 30 and over with three normal smears in a row be screened every 2-3 years.
 - Mammogram: the American Cancer Society advises yearly exams for women ages 40-50. Women younger than 40 with a family history of breast cancer may choose to test at an earlier age.
 - Cholesterol level: recommended periodically for women 45 and over (or younger if there is a strong family history of elevated cholesterol).
 - Bone-density scan: Postmenopausal women should have this test annually.
 - Colonoscopy: Once every 10 years if you are 50 or over.
- There are more than 80 **autoimmune diseases** ranging from familiar ones like rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, lupus, multiple sclerosis and Type 1 diabetes to more obscure ones like pemphigus vulgaris. In autoimmune diseases, something goes awry with the process in which the immune system learns to distinguish self from non-self and starts fighting against it. Most of the victims are women and it is estimated that almost eight women for every man have lupus, scleroderma, thyroiditis and Sjogren's syndrome. Women also outnumber men for multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease. The reasons for the gender disparity are not known, but many scientists theorize that it results from women's hormones, like estrogen, as many of the ailments begin after puberty and tend to ease after menopause. Another theory is that immune attacks are set off by the presence of cells from another person in the bloodstream and women retain some cells from fetuses after pregnancy.
- Women continue to struggle for **parity of the heart**, but it seems that women and their doctors are paying far too little attention! According to studies published by the American Heart Association, women are inadequately cared for in terms of preventing heart disease and in diagnosing and treating it. Women were more likely than men to be assigned to a lower risk category. Also, reports from the Mayo Clinic show that women are less likely than men to participate in postcoronary exercise and health-improvement programmes. For much of the 20th century, heart disease was considered mainly a disease of middle-aged and older men. Heart disease in women was sorely neglected as most studies were carried out on men. Today, cardiovascular disease is the No.1 killer of American women. Women are more likely than men to have their heart symptoms misdiagnosed and mistreated, even by specialists. See the chart with symptoms on page 18.

Recommended reading

- *Make New Friends and Keep the Old—Friendships Can Save Your Life* by Shelley E. Taylor, Ph.D. The 2000 landmark study on women's friendships identified physical measures associated with stress management. Most studies about stress had mainly focused on the male response, but this study proves that the **female response is different**.

Interestingly, recent research shows that women's tendency to use communication to relieve stress, such as having a network of friends to help release the stresses of life, actually may be saving their lives.

- *The Mommy Brain: How Motherhood Makes Us Smarter* by Katherine Ellison. The book tackles some of the myths regarding motherhood and rethinks the mental state of motherhood after recent years of evolution of our notion of just what it means to be smart. It is not a divide between working or non-working mothers but a complete collection of recent research that is pulled together to **confirm that the biological changes of motherhood enhance a women's potential—not detract from it as is often thought.**
- *Do Women Shy Way From Competition* by Niederle Muriel and Lise Vestelund (working paper). Interviews and various experiments convinced the researchers that the gender gap was not due mainly to women's insecurities about their abilities but to different appetites for competition.

Symptoms of cardiovascular disease

Both sexes	Women only
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain, pressure, squeezing or stabbing pain in the chest• Pain radiating to shoulder, back or arm• Pounding heart, change in rhythm• Difficulty breathing• Heartburn, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain• Cold sweats or clammy skin• Dizziness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pressure or discomfort without chest pain• Sudden onset of weakness, shortness of breath, dizziness, fatigue, body aches or overall feeling of illness• Unusual feeling or mild discomfort in the back, chest, arm, neck, throat or jaw without chest pain• Impending sense of doom or unexplained anxiety

Websites

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eoo/index.htm>: An information base on Equal Employment Opportunities for Women and Men (e.quality@work).

<http://www.sangonet.org.za>: The monthly e-newsletter of the Southern African Non-Governmental Organisation Network (SANGONeT).

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/ctte/SEA.htm>: Sexual exploitation, abuse and peacekeeping information.

http://iseek.un.org/integrity_and_accountability_measures: A new internal web page has been established to provide staff with the details concerning reform proposals as they become available.

http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?top_galleries_index.html: Institute for peace and war reporting

You can find a monthly list of senior vacancy announcements (P-5 and above) at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/>

You can read **network** online at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/Network>
To receive hard copies of **network** please send an e-mail request to network-newsletter@un.org

Letters/e-mails from readers

Male perspective on gender

The 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing brought to the fore the issue of advancing the rights of women. Women's rights activists took the gauntlet and soon gender perspective became synonymous with women's rights. It created an impression that gender is a matter of women, discussed by women and for women.

For me, engendering a gender perspective is all about respect for human rights. Yet, I also fell into the same fallacy of seeing gender issues as exclusively coterminous with women's rights. Many still hold this view. When I was placed in the Office of the Gender Advisor (OGA) temporarily, my first reaction was, at best, lukewarm. Even entering the Guinness Book as the first international male staff of OGA was not very attractive either. It seemed odd.

Soon I was proved wrong in my opinionated perception of gender affairs. I discovered that gender is not all about women or sex; everybody, including men, must be involved in promoting gender issues in every sphere of life; and observance of gender perspective enhances peacekeeping missions.

In all, I learned that gender is dynamic, cultural or relative while sex is natural, biological and universal. Gender perspective is essentially geared to ensuring that no one group is left behind. I was lucky to work with a great team of nice ladies who were happy to show-case me as a practical example of their gender sensitivity. The fun was, however, cut short with my eventual move to another section after one month.

Chijioke Ononiwu
The Standing Board of Inquiry
UNMIL
June 2005

E-mail—28 June 2005

This is Aswini Otiv—Advocate from Baroda, India. One of my friends has forwarded the e-mail with **network** and out of curiosity I had gone through it completely and am amazed by the tremendous work being done. Congrats. And here our interest matches... I have read and written many papers on subjects relating to empowerment of women and wish to contribute on the subject. Can I expect a response? Best luck and again congratulations. Please keep it up.

Regards,

Ashwini

You can find a monthly list of senior vacancy
announcements (P-5 and above) at
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/>

You can read *network* online at
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/Network>
To receive hard copies of *network*
please send an e-mail request to
network-newsletter@un.org

network—The UN Women's Newsletter

**Editor-in-Chief: Aparna Mehrotra, Focal Point for Women,
Office of the Gender Adviser on the Advancement of Women (OSAGI)**

Production: Rebeca Dain, OSAGI

Design and Layout: Graphic Design Unit, Outreach Division, DPI

Printed by the United Nations Publishing Section, New York

Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat

United Nations, Two UN Plaza, DC2-1290, New York, NY 10017

Telephone: (1) (212) 963-6828; Fax (1) (212) 963-9545

E-mail: network-newsletter@un.org