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Letter from the Focal Point for Women

Dear Friends,

The coverage in this issue focuses in large measure on two issues fundamental to women: health and violence, and gender representation. With respect to health, the voice of Amy Hill speaks emphatically and clearly on the issue of violence and HIV/AIDS prevention. In her article on the Human Papilloma virus, Dr. Ana Lita speaks to its silent threat and the hope the new vaccine provides.

With respect to gender representation, a summary of the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/61/318) is included. The statistics do not bode well, bringing into stark relief the urgent need to address the clearly negative trends. Projects of current trends indicate that at current rates of growth in the representation of women, gender parity is minimally 68 years away! These trends have, however, caught the attention of policy makers in ways that demonstrate a sense of strong concern. While alarm is at best kept at bay, if channeled into positive and constructive future directions, it can be helpful. That is our hope.

Finally, we are more than pleased to carry an interview with Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Office of Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC). She is well known to the international community, having also served as the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women for the UN from 1994 to 2003.

In Solidarity

Aparna Mehrotra

INTERVIEW WITH RADHIKA COOMARASWAMY

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC)

By Rebeca Dain



Radhika Coomaraswamy (Sri Lanka) was appointed Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in April 2006. Ms. Coomaraswamy is a lawyer by training and an internationally known human rights advocate. She worked as Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (1994-

2003) and in May 2003 she was appointed Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission. She has also served as a member of the Global Faculty of the New York University School of Law and has published widely, including two books on constitutional law and numerous articles on ethnic studies and the status of women. Ms. Coomaraswamy is a graduate from the UN International School (UNIS), Princeton and has a J.D. from Columbia University, an LLM from Harvard University and several honorary PhDs. Ms. Coomaraswamy has won many awards and in November 2005 her Government conferred on her the honorary title of "Deshamanya" in recognition of her service to Sri Lanka and the world.

Q: *As the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, how would you briefly describe your mandate and work?*

A: Very exciting! We need to support global initiatives to end grave violations against children affected by armed conflict and promote rights-based protection for children affected by these conflicts. We are also trying to make CAAC concerns an integral part of peacekeeping and peace building working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). And last but not least, we continuously try to raise awareness and give prominence to the rights and protection of children affected by armed conflict: before, during and after conflict situations. In addition, we undertake research with our partners. The area of the girl child is of great interest to me, because their reintegration is often more difficult since their families may or may not accept them back after they have been raped, had children and/or served as combatants. Our office, as such, is small; but our goals are very large. To carry out of work programme, we work in close cooperation with differ-

ent partners involved in protecting children's rights. We will also follow closely proceedings of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in cases relating to grave violations against children, in particular child recruitment.

Q: *What particular skills do you bring to the office?*

A: First, I bring a framework that attests to my varied expertise as a specialist on women and children rights. In addition, my commitment as a defender of strong human rights and my experience in protecting those rights, including children's rights, give me the right base for solidifying the mandates given to the CACC. Security Council resolution 1612 gave us the mandate to monitor and report on human rights violations of children. Needless to note, my experience as a Rapporteur on violence comes in very handy. Second, in my role as special advocate for children in armed conflict and the issues surrounded them, our office must reach out and create awareness about the perils of child soldiers. However,

one of the more pressing issues is their reintegration into society and how it can be done in the best way. To this I bring my own experience in Sri Lanka, which continues to be torn in cruel civil war between two ethnic factions. Finally, as an academic, I would like to see more research papers prepared about children's conflicts. Since Graça Machel's report 10 years ago there has not been an update and we have been requested to prepare one. I wish also to report on the issue of the girl child and the problems she faces in armed conflict; as well as a detailed study of the boy child. When we talk to the boys, they have the sense that being a masculine man implies violence and guns; and I believe that they are looking at the wrong role models. Research on this subject is very important for us to understand what needs to be changed and how do we move them away from those roles.

Q: *Can you share with us the main thrust of SC 1612 and its importance?*

A: For the first time SC resolution 1612 of 26 July 2005 condemned the recruitment and use of child soldiers, setting up a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the issue. This was a landmark because. It was the only time that the Council decided to monitor a human rights situation world wide. It also established that such mechanism must operate with the participation of, and in cooperation with, national governments and relevant UN and civil society partners to ensure its successful monitoring. With the participation of UNICEF, special mechanisms are being set up to more effectively monitor the human rights of children. This resolution's primary concern is with the issue of the child soldier, but also includes other great violations such as killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction, denial of humanitarian access and attacks on schools and hospitals; monitoring is done through task forces in the countries where the fighting occurs. Through the Secretary-General's report we report back to the SC Working Group on Children and Conflict, which in turn makes subsequent targeted and graduated recommendations to the Security Council. The actual monitoring of 1612 will take a long time. Just a few convictions in the International Criminal Court (ICC) have a deterrence effect about the consequences of such violence and the international system would send a strong message. The sense of impunity may be able to deter future event. Again, these effects can't be quantified; we can't foresee how many children can be saved through these actions.

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Q: *Who are the main partners of CAAC mandates?*

A: As I stated above, the staffing of our office is small and we hope to do the research papers in partnership with other offices. I see my office and my role as that of a facilitator and advocate of policy issues. In following up resolution 1612 we are planning to work closely together with UNICEF, UNHCR and OCHA, along with other partners. With regard to the report on the girl child, it would be a tripartite research project; hopefully a joint effort with the Division on the Advancement of Women (DAW), UNICEF, and UNIFEM. With our office as a facilitator for the UN system we want to see the establishment of a Steering Committee composed of our main partners from inside and outside the UN, including NGOs that work on these topics. It will have to be a collective endeavour. It remains for the UN system needs to prioritize and determine which issues need to be carried out first.

Q: *Have the Millennium Development Goals (MG) affected the discharge of your programme?*

A: I took over this job after the MDG had been promulgated. I found that overall they did not stress some of the most important women's issues such as violence, as there is no violence goal. To some extent gender issues are being mainstreamed, but the architecture of gender is weak and inadequate. We don't have a women's agency or institution that has a world wide field presence. Coming from a developing country, I believe, it is very important to have such image. Although there are various funds and programmes dealing with gender issues, they are small and have small budgets. We also don't have a woman Under Secretary-General in NY to press these issues at the highest levels. There is a setback in having many different outfits because they compete among themselves. I strongly believe that everybody must work in partnership and keep a goal in mind. For instance, on my desk I have a picture of a child and when people come to me complaining about problems, I look at the picture and ask myself what is best for the child. Therefore, we need to ask what is best for the women and then we can decide who does it and how to go about it. Everything must be in partnership.

Q: *You have previously stated that your office is very interested in the area of the girl child. Can you tell us why?*

A: We see a pattern emerging in some conflicts. First, the girl child is often abducted or voluntarily given away; then, she becomes a sex slave in the armed forces and also a combatant. She also is the person who cooks, cleans and keeps the camp running. Sometimes they are sex slaves and not soldiers; sometimes they are just camp followers. Everything is mixed up and we have not studied this in depth.

Q: *Some say violence is genderless. Would you care to comment?*

A: Violence is very gender oriented. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states very clearly that violence is a historical manifestation of the unequal power relations between men and women; and therefore gender, preventing the advancement of women and that violence against women is one of the crucial social problems by which women are forced into a subordinate position, both in the home and the community. There is violence between men and men, but it is different because of cause and manifestation. In the relationship between men and women, there is a power dynamic, whereby men assert control and try in most cases, to ensure women's subordination through the use of violence. Between men and men there is also a power struggle but of a different kind: control over resources, control over populations and therefore entails a different type of violence.

Q: *What more needs to be done in the UN Secretariat to protect its female population from harassment in the workplace and sexual harassments?*

A: The UN has come a long way. 10 years ago there were no resolutions condemning sexual harassment and harassment in the workplace. Until recently there was no policy of zero tolerance. Finally, a clear message came, from both the UN and Member States that these types of behaviour would not be tolerated and it has been enforced with resolutions, rules and regulations. Also, let me suggest to my women colleagues that we should all bring clear cases of sexual harassment to the forefront, so that action can be taken.

Q: *What issue to you consider vital to success for women?*

A: The most important thing is to be true to oneself and your dreams. I strongly believe that if you get your energy from that, everything else falls into place sooner or later. If you know what you want and follow your dream it is easier. The pitfalls are that anywhere in the world, any workplace, there are negative forces such as people that are too bureaucratic, who may be too competitive; the clue to success is never let yourself be trapped by the negative forces. Everybody should try to rise above them and continue with their own personal tasks. To avoid negative waves keep track of your positive logic.

Q: *What if any is the impact of having more women Presidents with regard to the recruitment of child soldiers?*

A: I think the ICC could turn the corner by bringing down indictments on the issue of recruitment of child soldiers. The UN system is geared towards punishing those involved. This looms large on individuals and governments. I don't know if there would be complete reduction, but there will be a less. Once that is done we need to think about reintegrating the children and how to build their lives. Regarding women Presidents, there is for certain a maternal side in women presidents but I don't think that history has shown that women presidents are less war like or less ruthless than men; we have had many very strong women just like men. However, I do think that a critical mass of women in parliaments around the world bringing women's experience into mainstream politics does indeed change priorities in the political system; and I think that is what we should aim for: get women involved in politics who will bring women's concern into politics. If that happened I think there will be a reduction and children will be better protected.

Q: *Do you agree that children should not be tried for war crimes?*

A: Yes, I do because having met these children I feel that war crimes requires to have an adult sense of control over events, that there is a moral agent that can make a decision. When I talk to the children many of them have been induced to do this through drugs. In addition, they do it because children generally obey adults; they have no capacity to refuse adults especially in a war context. When you speak to them they seem to be haunted by their experiences and express remorse. I believe that the Sierra Leone formula is the best formula: they tried the adult leaders; those who are most

responsible and bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes. With regard to the children we need to think of truth and reconciliation and others processes to try to make them acknowledge that what they did was wrong and allow the community to reaccept them.

Q: *Do you believe that coupling women and children in policy and programmes is a good idea?*

A: No. I think they should be kept separate because women are adults and we should empower them to make decisions for their lives. I think children require far more guidance and protection; we need to consult children with regard to their future, but we should guide them and protect in a different way that we do women.

Q: *What personal and career experiences have influenced your understanding and vision regarding the status of women?*

A: I was raised in a very loving home, where the men were very kind and less violent than the women. However, when I was in the USA as a student I was greatly influenced by the women movement of the 60s; and when I returned home, I met an extraordinary mentor whose name is Kumari Jayawardene. She spearheaded the peace movement in Sri Lanka and although we both belonged to different ethnic groups: she was Sinhalese and I am Tamil, we jointly used to go around with Muslim women friends and speak on peace and against racism. She spoke about women's rights in the context of nationalism and third world societies. I got very involved with the national Sri Lanka movement as well as the Asian women's movement. After that I became the special UN Rapporteur in violence against women.

Q: *Do you share the belief that executive women have to make difficult choices between work and their private lives?*

A: I do believe that this is the most difficult issue for women. I did research on women in the private sector and found that the vast majority of women in corporate boards were either single women without children, or single-headed family households. This means, it appears, that society has still not developed sufficiently to allow women to effectively handle the dual burden of home and work. I am not married. However, I believe that the women's movement has served to sensitize men to the need to take over some of the burden of the family and to create a social support network for the family

in ways to enable women to continue to work outside the home. Personally, my dreams have always been related to social justice and women's rights; beyond that I tried not to dictate my life. I just lived it.

Q: *Can you share with us your personal philosophy?*

A: When I was a child my father was with the UN. I went to the United Nations International School (UNIS). Thus most of my young adult life revolved around the UN and its principles. When I graduated as a Valedictorian in UNIS, I was asked the question as to what the school has done for me? 30 years later I can say that it provided me with strong political and social values which have been the mainstream of my work, whether in Sri Lanka or New York.

CONGRATULATIONS TO

UN related

- Ms. **Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa** (Bahrain) was elected by acclamation on 8 June 2006, by the General Assembly as the next **President** of its sixty-first session, which is scheduled to begin on 12 September. She was one of the first of two women lawyers to practice law in Bahrain. Ms. Al-Khadifa had held many senior positions with leading legal organizations of the world, including with the International Bar Association. She was currently the Legal Adviser to the Royal Court in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Her pioneering role in the legal sphere had been coupled more recently with a prestigious diplomatic assignment as Bahrain's Ambassador to France, as well as a permanent delegate to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 2000 to 2004. Throughout her professional life, Ms. Al Khalifa had been a champion of women's rights in her society and in the court system.
- Ms. **Carolyn McAskie** (Canada) for her appointment as Assistant Secretary-General for **Peacebuilding Support**, a post closely aligned with the newly created Peacebuilding Commission, which aims to help post-conflict countries avoid sliding back into war. Ms. McAskie served most recently as the senior UN envoy to Burundi and head of the UN peace-keeping operation there.

UN bodies

- The membership of the **Advisory Group for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)** was announced on 28 April 2006. The CERF will provide periodic policy guidance and expert advice to the Secretary-General on the use and impact of the Fund, including on the timeliness and appropriateness of allocations and management of the CERF; and will also review the Fund's performance against the objectives set by the General Assembly and assess funding levels and make recommendations regarding replenishment. Out of 12 members, the following women were appointed: **Catherine Bragg** (Canada); **Barbara Carby** (Jamaica); **Marika Fahlen** (Sweden) and **Jemilah Mahmood** (Malaysia).
- The following women were nominated on 4 July 2006 to serve in the General Assembly committees, as follows:
 - **Second Committee** (Economic and Financial) elected Ms. **Tiina Intelmann** (Estonia) as Chairperson;
 - **Third Committee** (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) elected Ms. **Elena Molaroni** (San Marino) as Rapporteur;
 - **Fourth Committee** (Special Political and Decolonization) elected Ms. **Madhu Raman Acharya** (Nepal) as Chairperson; Ms. **Monia Bolanos Perez** (Guatemala) as Vice-Chairperson; and Ms. **Rana Salayeva** (Azerbaijan) as Rapporteur;

Others

- The **Secretary-General Kofi Annan** accepted the first Seville Node between Cultures Award on 11 April 2006, and immediately pledged to donate the accompanying monetary prize to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) project combating sexual violence against women and children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The award recognized an individual's contribution to cross-cultural understanding among Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- Ms. **Mary Fisher** (USA) for her appointment as **Special Representative for the Joint United**

Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

Ms. Fisher became an internationally recognized chronicler of the global AIDS epidemic after being diagnosed with the illness and she is a prominent writer, artist and motivational speaker. Nearly 40 million people are living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, according to UNAIDS, which estimates that every minute a child either dies of an AIDS-related illness or becomes infected with it.

- Ms. **Mona Jassem al-Kawari** (Bahrain) appointed to the civil courts on 7 June 2006. Ms. Al-Kawari is the first woman judge in the history of her country and her appointment became the first among the Gulf Arab states.
- The **2006 winners of the Literacy prizes** of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) annually awarded in recognition of effective contributions to the fight against illiteracy were selected on 20 June 2006 from projects in Cuba, Morocco, Pakistan, India and Turkey. Among others, the **Mother Child Education Foundation** (Turkey) which has developed teaching strategies for underprivileged girls and women as well as army conscripts.

succession planning, work/family policies, management culture and mechanism for managerial accountability accelerate the goal of 50/50 gender distribution. On the basis of observed trends from 1998 to 2004, gender balance for professional staff with appointments of one year or more in the Secretariat would be reached in 68 years, in 2072.

Statistics in the United Nations System (in the professional and higher categories for appointments of one year or more)

- As of 31 December 2004, the representation of women stood at 37 per cent (8,497 out of 23,006), and at 24 per cent at the D-1 level and above;
- Overall gender parity has been achieved at the P-1 and P-2 levels and in only two organizations of the United Nations system: UNITAR (56 per cent -15 women out of 27), and UNFPA, (50 per cent -192 women out of 381); while two other organizations are close to achieving gender balance: UNICEF (46 per cent women - 931 women out of 2015) and UNESCO (45 per cent women - 473 women out of 1048).
- The Representation of women Resident Coordinators increased from 21 per cent in 2004 to 33 per cent in July 2006.

Highlights from the Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/61/318)

General Assembly resolution 59/164, recalled the “goal ...adopted by the Beijing Conference on Women of achieving overall gender equality particularly at the professional level and above by 2000”, and regretted that it had not been met. It also noted with particular concern that gender balance considerations had yet to be effectively integrated throughout the human resources management policies. The Secretary General and the Heads of the Organizations of the UN System were requested to ensure that recruitment strategies, promotion and retention policies, career development, justice, anti-harassment and anti-sexual harassment policies, human resources and

Statistics in the UN Secretariat for the period June 2004 – June 2006

- As of 30 June 2006, women still accounted for 37 per cent (2,371 out of 6,334) of all staff in the professional and higher categories with appointments of one year or more;
- At the D-1 level and above, the proportion of women decreased by 4 per cent to 25 per cent (145 women out of 573);
- At the D-1 level alone, the representation decreased a striking 7 per cent to 25 per cent;
- At the D-2 level alone, the proportion increased by 3 per cent during the same period.
- At the P-5 to P-1 levels, the proportion increased negligibly by 0.37 per cent to 39 per cent (2,226 women out of 5,761).

- With respect to departments and offices with 20 or more Professional Staff, five achieved gender balance;
- Six departments or offices had fewer than 30 per cent women staff;
- At the the D-1 level and above, the situation is not encouraging: only four Departments/Offices have reached or exceeded the gender balance goal at the decision making levels, a decrease by two departments since June-04;
- Thirteen departments or offices have fewer than 30 per cent women at these levels and three have none;
- The largest department in the Secretariat is the FMADPKO. Women constituted 30 percent of the professional staff assigned to peace keeping operations, an increase of 2.5 per cent in the last two years. This positive development is offset, however, by a 2 per cent decline at the D-1 level, bringing the representation of women to a mere 10 per cent (14 out of 120).

Representation in other categories

- In the Security and Safety Service Category, the proportion of women in the Secretariat is 11.5 per cent, (34 women of 295) a decrease of 1.5 per cent;
- In the Trades and Crafts Category, the proportion of women increased 0.1 percent to 2.4 per cent (4 women of 168). Women comprise 60 per cent of the general service staff.

Promotions

Women at the **P-2 to D-2** levels accounted for **46.3 per cent** (317 out of 685) of all promotions, an **increase of 0.4 per cent** since June 2004.

- Within the reporting period the percentage of promotions at the P-2 to D-1 levels shows a steady decline of approximately 9 per cent with each increasing level. At the P-2 and D-1 levels, promotions of women constitute 65.4 per cent and 29.5 per cent, respectively.

Trends

In the appointment of women during the last 8 years (July 1998 to June 2006) show that in the Professional and higher categories the percentage of

women in the Secretariat **decreased by 2.3 percent**, from **40.1 per cent** (1998) to **37.8 per cent** (2006). **Gender parity** in appointments has been maintained only at the **P-2** level.

- The most striking decrease in the trends was at the D-2 level where the percentage of women appointed to this level dropped by 49.3 per cent, from 55.6 per cent (1998) to 6.3 per cent (2006).
- Other trends in the appointments notes an increase in the percentage of women appointed to the USG and ASG levels, from 0 per cent for both (1998) to 14.3 and 12.5 per cent (2006), respectively. For the D-1 level there was a decrease of 3.3 per cent, from 27.3 (1998) to 24 per cent (2006) and at the two higher Professional levels, women appointed to the P-5 level decreased by 5.3 per cent, from 31.8 (1998) to 44.2 per cent (2006) and women appointed to the P-4 level increased by 7.1 per cent, from 26.2 (1998) to 33.3 per cent (2006).

Transfers

Women accounted for 49 per cent of all transfers in the Secretariat, refuting the myth that women are less mobile than men.

Separations

Women account for 47 per cent (59 out of 125) of all resignations, compared to 39 per cent in the previous period. Women accounted for 46 per cent (41 out of 88) of separations due to agreed termination (compared to 20 percent in the previous period). An examination of exit interviews specifically designed to uncover the underlying reasons would seem essential. Anecdotal evidence suggests that failure of the internal justice system to offer timely and appropriate redress to sexual harassment and harassment, contributes negatively to the status of women in the organization and to its numbers.

Study on the slow causes of the advancement of women

General Assembly resolution 57/180 requested an analysis of the causes of the slow advancement of women. In 2004 we reported on the analysis for the Secretariat (Phase I). This year we report on the UN system at large (Phase II). As per the findings, a few

key challenges must be addressed if the goal of gender balance is to be attained:

- **There is a need for clear policies, accompanied by strong implementation.**

There is a clear correlation between focused implementation of gender-sensitive policies/measures and increased representation of women in the retention, recruitment and promotion of staff. Stricter adherence to gender-sensitive policies would accelerate progress towards gender balance. The analysis revealed a significant perception on the part of many that policies promoting gender mainstreaming and gender balance were providing undue advantage to women. However, the gender balance statistics and relatively slow pace or deceleration of progress, strongly indicate otherwise. They point instead to the need to enhance the formulation, implementation and accountability of policies/measures directed at achieving gender balance.

- **There is a need for a commitment at the highest level to institute positive and mandatory special measures.**

Special measures for Gender Equality must be implemented and monitored, with enforced accountability as a matter of routine. The prevailing culture does not voluntarily implement Special Measures for Gender Equality whereby an equally or better qualified woman is selected, nor does it facilitate the retention of women at an individual level. Under the previous staff selection the implementation of special measures was not a choice; it was an obligation. Members of the network of 60 departmental focal points and alternates as well as the promotion and appointment bodies served as monitors and facilitators, and on a post by post basis. Post Facto monitoring, as is currently conducted on the basis of annual reviews of Human Resource Action Plans, result in opportunity lost and with no effective means of redress. While OSAGI and the network of departmental focal points have an important advisory and monitoring function, OHRM implementation and departmental accountability for gender balance, particularly at the level of programme managers and on a continuous basis, is fundamental. The current staff selec-

tion system provides for a removal of authority in the event of non compliance. However, this authority has rarely been exercised.

- **The influence of the working climate and culture on career progression and productivity.**

The introduction of work/life policies to attract and retain quality staff, especially women, has not yet positively impacted the current managerial culture. Despite the promulgation of work life policies, the culture continues to view these policies with negativity and reticence, as both a barrier to efficiency and productivity and, as incompatible with career advancement and the performance of managerial level posts. This attitude requires change: to become an overt message of encouragement for the routine and not exceptional use of flexible methods, such as telecommuting and flexible hours. The future work force demands it, as manifest by the increased trend of usage of these methods in both the public and private sector.

- **The need for there to be clear mechanisms of accountability for gender balance at the managerial level.**

Accountability for achieving the 50/50 representation target is critical. The current staffing system places responsibility for delivering human resources targets, including geographical and gender targets, directly with the heads of departments/offices. The lack of an enforcement mechanism to hold managers accountable for achieving gender representation goals. To promote greater accountability for the fulfillment of the gender balance targets in the UN system, one has to enforce accountability at senior management levels.

As of 1 January 2005, the beginning of the current Human Resource Action Plan cycle, two accountability targets for gender balance have been incorporated into the Plans:

- the selection of women candidates to at least 50 per cent of all vacant posts, especially in the professional and higher categories;
- an annual increase of at least two percentage points in the representation of women.

These targets should be given practical meaning by effective implementation and enforcement measures.

However, despite the targets, the results, 18 months later are not encouraging. It cannot be emphasized enough that these targets are a floor – not a ceiling.

Large retirement bulges face many UN organizations over the next five or six years. They represent opportunities to redress the imbalance – particularly at the managerial levels of P-5 and above. To this end the suggested measures include:

- Creating transparent selection processes, including assessment procedures, for senior posts; and
- Fostering of an organizational culture, supported visibly by the senior-management team that advocates the benefits of work/life balance for all employees, and monitors the application, with a particular focus on managers.
- Application of binding Special Measures for Gender Equality with checks and balances introduced at several stages starting with the departments, through the Central Review Bodies and finally at the annual evaluation of the HRAPs.
- Strengthening the role of departmental focal points, providing them with strong terms of reference, information access and formal participation in the departmental selection process.

AROUND THE UN

- Ms. **Muktar Mai**, a Pakistani woman who was gang raped as clan vengeance in her native village for crimes allegedly committed by her brother, was invited to speak at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 2 May 2006. After her tragic experience, Ms. Mai has become a world-renown education and women's rights activist in Pakistan, in spite of traditional structures under which she was expected to commit suicide out of shame. With the support of her immediate family, her Imam and some journalists, she took steps to ensure the full force of the law was levied against her attackers and she was financially compensated. Ms. Mai returned to the village founding a school that now has 300 girls and 200 boys, along with a crisis center that advises women and girls threatened by childhood marriage and other practices. Ms. Mai slogan is: "End oppression with education."
- The United Nations marked **World Press Freedom Day** on 3 May 2006 with awards, exhibitions, and clarion calls for the protection of journalists, after a year that saw a record number of media professionals killed or injured in the line of duty. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura announced in Colombo, Sri Lanka the award of the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize to this year's laureate - Lebanese journalist Ms. **May Chidiac**, who lost one of her hands and her left leg in a car bomb attack last September.
- The **Advisory Committee on Genocide Prevention** was established on 3 May 2006. The Committee will provide guidance and support to the work of the Secretary-General Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. In addition to its Chair and Special Adviser Juan E. Mendez, two women were appointed out of seven members: Ms. **Monica Andersson** (Sweden) and Ms. **Sadako Ogata** (Japan).
- The composition of the **Board of the UN Global Compact**, the world's largest voluntary corporate citizenship, was nominated on 20 April 2006. Out of a group of 20 business, labour and civil society leaders from around the world four women were appointed: Ms. **Suzanne Nora Johnson** (Goldman Sachs Group, USA); Ms. **Anne Lauvergeon** (Chair of the Executive Board, Areva, France); Ms. **Habiba Al Marashi** (Chair, Eirates Environmental Group, United Arab Emirates); and Ms. **Mary Robinson** (Chair, Realizing Rights, Ireland). The Board will provide strategic advice for the initiative as a whole and make related recommendations to the UN Global Compact office, to advance universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption. With more than 2,500 participating companies in over 90 countries, it is the largest voluntary corporate citizenship initiative in the world.
- The UN Population Fund (**UNFPA**) and the World Health Organization (**WHO**) announced on 21 June 2006 that both agencies were coordinating action to **reverse the global trend of deteriorating levels of sexual and reproductive**

health. With more than half a million women dying each year during pregnancy and childbirth from largely preventable causes, and 340 million new cases of sexually transmitted bacterial infections (STIS) annually, the agencies have identified a number of priority areas for joint action, including a coordinated action plan for a global STI prevention and control strategy; support to increase skilled health attendants in target countries; and plans to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health. They also call for the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health in national economic planning and training of country teams for planning and working together. The agencies will also coordinate work in addressing female genital mutilation/cutting; obstetric fistula, a devastating childbirth injury; violence against women; and a pilot programme in two countries to introduce the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine.

AROUND THE WORLD: GENDER NEWS

- Ms. **Yakin Erturk**, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences conducted a fact-finding mission in Turkey on 22 to 31 May 2006 to gather first-hand information on the question of violence against women. A specific focus was the suicides of women and girls. After the visit, Ms. Erturk would present a report containing her findings and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council.
- **A Joint Programme on Adult Functional Literacy** was launched in Afghanistan on 23 May 2006, responding to the plight of 8 million illiterate adults, where the average adult literacy is estimated at just 43 per cent, and **female literacy at only 14 per cent**, to improve not only literacy levels, but also supporting long-term progress in the economic and social sectors. The initiative is a partnership between the Government and UN agencies including the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the UN World Food Programme (WFP), and the UN

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The Programme has set itself a goal of increasing adult literacy levels by 50 per cent over the next three years, in line with national development targets.

- The Government of **Liberia** not only began recruiting women into its new postwar army to ensure gender balance, but it also launched its **National Girls' Education Policy** on 18 April 2006. The policy calls for a collective effort to reach Millennium Development Goal 2: universal primary education for every Liberian child. The launch of the policy is the culmination of more than two years of work by the Ministry of Education, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other partners, including the Forum for African Women Educationalists, promoting the education of the girl child. The girls' education policy calls for:
 - Meeting Millennium Development Goal 2 by providing free and compulsory primary school and reducing secondary school fees by 50 per cent;
 - Recruiting and training more female teachers;
 - Providing counseling in schools for girls;
 - Ending the impunity of teachers who commit sexual abuse and assault of students;
 - Offering life skills education at schools to raise self-esteem so girls can say no to sexual abuse;
 - Increasing the availability of small scale scholarships for girls;
 - Strengthening health systems in schools;
 - Opening new parent teacher associations and girls clubs;

And promoting adult literacy.

- The House of Representative of **Nepal** decided to **grant citizenship rights to children born to Nepali mothers** on 6 June 2006. This represented a 'milestone in the advancement of women's civil and political rights,' as previously only fathers could pass on citizenship. The House also called for 33 per cent of civil service jobs to be reserved for women, and for a review of all laws that discriminate against women and girls.
- The annual meeting of **ORIGIN** (Organizational and Institutional Gender Information Network)

was hosted by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and took place in Luxembourg, from 8-9 June 2006. The sessions included topics on:

- Where women want to work. A framework for competitively recruiting, retaining and developing female staff;
 - Disability awareness and initiatives to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities; and
 - Strategies for enhancing women's leadership.
- **Dr. Wassila Ltaief** (Egypt) states in an article entitled “**International law, mixed marriage and the law of succession in North Africa**” published in the International Social Science Journal of June 2005, issue 184, pp.331-350 that in Egypt, national laws deeply disagree with international law on the issue of mixed marriages, because Egypt, obedient to the Shari'a, has banned marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. It is quite acceptable, on the other hand, for a Muslim man to marry not only one but as many as four non-Muslim women (www.hrwf.org).
 - The **International Day of the Midwife** was celebrated on 8 May 2006. The UN Population Fund together with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) are working together to strengthen midwifery capacity worldwide to reduce the high levels of deaths and disability among mothers and babies. Recruiting midwives, especially in developing countries, would save the lives of about 5 million women, and prevent 80 million illnesses from pregnancy or childbirth by 2015.
 - The **Day of the African Child** was celebrated on 16 June 2006. The Day commemorates June 16, 1976 when thousands of black school children in Soweto, South Africa, took to the streets to protest the inferior quality of their education under the apartheid regime and to demand to be taught in their own language. Women and children become more vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation in emergencies and are at particular risk of gender-based violence given their limited ability to protect themselves.
 - According to an **Associated Press** report of 19 June 2006 **some husbands in western India are renting out their wives to other men**, cashing in on a shortage of single women available for marriage, with a going price of \$175 per month. The male-female ratio is becoming increasingly skewed across India because many parents abort female fetuses, preferring sons to daughters. Overall, the number of girls per 1,000 boys was 945 but it started to decline since 1991. The 2001 census showed 828 females for every 1,000 males, although officials say the number could be as low as 700 girls per 1,000 boys in some states.
 - **The African Women's Millennium Initiative** (Awomi) First Youth Leadership Initiative in Africa (YOWLI) opened in Dakar, Senegal on 24 June 2006. YOWLI participants were African female and male youths aged 18 to 30 years from about 25 countries. YOWLI engages African youth with proven track records in social or academic leadership with training sessions aimed at sharpening their level of understanding of the social, economic and political terrains in which they live in, including understanding of the linkages between gender and age discrimination, the increasing trend towards the feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS and local as well as global policies carried in their respective communities and nations. It also intends to critically and realistically evaluate the root causes for repeated failures in local and global governance and fair access to resources, opportunities and services (<http://www.icae.org.uy/eng/voicesrising%20188.html>).
 - Discrimination is a complex phenomenon and the glass ceiling for women is held in place as much by micro-iniquities that may appear subtle as it is by disparate treatment with clear economic consequences. On 22 June 2006, the **USA Supreme Court reviewed the case of a female forklift operator who suffered retaliation after she complained of sexual harassment**. The Burlington Northern appealed the original verdict on grounds that neither White's transfer nor her suspension was bad enough to qualify as unlawful retaliation. Forklift operator Sheila White's experience is a near perfect example of the hostile treatment faced by many women who accept non-traditional jobs in a blue-collar environment to support their families. The Supreme Court agreed with White **ruling that retaliation can be any action likely to dissuade a reasonable employee from complaining about discrimination and that a change in an employee's work schedule may make**

little difference to many workers, but may matter enormously to a young mother with school-age children (www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2709).

- **Kuwait** went to the polls to vote for the 50-seat National Assembly on 29 June 2006, with women running and casting ballots for the first time in a national poll. Parliament passed a law in May 2005 allowing women the right to vote and run for office. There were 27 female candidates among the 249 people running in the election; women constituted 57 % of registered voters and went to separate women polling stations. However, only 35% actually voted. Women failed to win a single seat in their first attempt to run for parliament.

GALLUP SURVEY: WHAT WOMEN WANT: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF MUSLIM WOMEN

Sections of the Gallup survey conducted in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey was released on 8 June 2006. According to the poll conducted in 2005, and which focused on the expectations of women, the results are unexpected. A strong majority of Muslim women believe they should have the right to vote without influence; work outside the home and serve at the highest levels of government. Simultaneously, their main concerns were the lack of unity among Muslim nations; violent extremism; and political and economic corruption. Poll analysts expressed surprise that the hijab or Muslim headscarf seen by many in the West as a preoccupation for an increasing number of Muslim women, was not mentioned in the list of their concerns. The survey as published is only the initial assessment of a larger study which will be completed by the end of the year. Egyptian-born Dalia Mogahed, Executive Director of Gallup Muslim Studies and coordinator of this poll, stated that by the end of 2006, Gallup would have interviewed Muslims in up to 40 Muslim countries, covering 90 percent of the global Muslim population.

Concerning women's rights in general, most Muslim women associated gender equality with

the West, with 78%, 71% and 48% saying so in Morocco, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Most women were put off by the lack of traditional values in the West and did not think that the adoption of Western values would help the Islamic world to progress politically and economically. The questions were open, allowing women to articulate for themselves their opinions, rather than requiring "yes, no, don't agree" responses.

Ms. Mogahed rejected the idea that Muslim women had been brainwashed by the dominant male culture, citing as proof the fact that women freely stated that they deserved certain rights. She warned that women who are perceived as too pro-West in outlook could become victims of a backlash. Associating gender equality with the West or with western values might actually alienate the very women they were trying to reach, and, at the same time, simultaneously, even energize those who oppose women's rights in the Muslim world, in the name of cultural guardianship.

IN YOUR INTEREST

Reports

- The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report **Teachers and education quality: monitoring global needs for 2015** launched on 19 April 2006, examines the working conditions and status of teachers by analyzing diverse factors such as entry standards, salary scales, teaching hours and deployment policies. It states that looming teacher shortages could prevent sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States from achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of providing universal primary education by 2015 (http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=47869&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).
- An advance preview of the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) report on the **State of the World Population 2006: A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration** calls on governments and individuals to recognize and value the contributions of

migrant women, and promote and respect their human rights. Women and girls make up half of all international migrants, totaling 95 million (<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/english/introduction.html>).

- The UN study on **The story behind the numbers: women and employment in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Commonwealth of Independent States** published on 13 June 2006, states that women's economic security has declined following the collapse of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe and the western countries of the former Soviet Union; and although women across the region are on average better educated than men, they are paid significantly less no matter what sector, public or private, or what occupation they work in (www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=66).

Secretary-General's Bulletins, information circulars and others administrative instructions

Information Circulars

- UN **sabbatical leave programme for 2007** – ST/IC/2006/28 of 28 July 2006 invites staff to apply for the sabbatical leave programme in 2007, in accordance with the provision of administrative instruction ST/AI/2000/4 of 5 April 2000.
- The new membership of the **Joint Disciplinary Committee (JDC)** at Headquarters – ST/IC/2006/20 of 30 May 2006 was approved. The Committee advises the Secretary-General in disciplinary cases. 9 women were selected out of 12 chairpersons.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- The **human rights crisis in Sudan's Darfur region continues to worsen and impunity remains the norm in human rights violations**, UN Commissioner for Human Rights **Louise Arbour** stated at the end of her six-day visit in May 2006. Women in West and South Darfur say they have been sexually assaulted, others have had babies born as a result of rape and, armed men are

alleged to be recruiting or abducting children from International Displaced Population (IDP) camps. Overall, at least 180,000 people have been killed and approximately 2 million uprooted from their homes in the three years since fighting erupted between the Government, pro-government militias and rebels in Darfur.

- A three-day **Symposium on sexual violence in conflict and beyond** was convened on 21 June 2006, by the UN Population Fund on behalf of the European Commission and the Belgian Government in Brussels, Belgium. More than 250 participants from all disciplines including UN agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, human rights activists and researchers, government ministers, doctors and other field-based humanitarian workers, parliamentarians, representatives from the International Criminal Court (ICC), military and police officers, war correspondents and others member of the media of about 30 countries gathered to address the problem in conflict-torn countries. The trend towards more civil and regional conflicts means civilians are targeted more than ever before, with systematic rape being a prominent feature of recent conflicts across the world (www.unfpa.org/emergencies/symposium06/index.htm).
- The Special Rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Council on violence against women Yakin Erturk reported that the gender equality experience in **Sweden** has been a contradictory process. While the equal opportunity agenda has paved the way for public representation of women, it was not effective in countering the deeply rooted patriarchal gender norms that sustain unequal power relations between women and men. According to a 2001 survey commissioned by the Government, it was found that 46 per cent of all women have experienced male violence since their fifteenth birthday, while 12 per cent had been subjected to such violence in the last year prior to the survey.

NEWS FROM PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

- **UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)** stated in a statement of 8 May 2006 that it is committed to prevent, identify and sanction the abhorrent practice of sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) in full

compliance with the Secretary-General's Bulletin "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" and its policy of zero tolerance. Steps taken include the establishment of a fully staffed Conduct and Discipline Unit to respond effectively to SEA, creation of an In-Country Network to ensure coordination and oversight on prevention, and development of standardized training modules on policies, procedures and guidelines for all personnel.

Article: Silence Speaks in South Africa:

Digital Storytelling to End Gender-Based Violence and Prevent HIV/AIDS

Amy L. Hill is a digital storytelling instructor and public health consultant. She co-founded and continues to coordinate Silence Speaks (www.silencespeaks.org) and other initiatives in her current role as Community Projects Director at the Center for Digital Storytelling (www.storycenter.org) in Berkeley, California. She has a B.A. in British and American literature from Scripps College, and a M.A. in Education/Gender Studies from Stanford University.

Every year, countless adults and children around the world experience violence. No country is immune to globally high rates of child and adolescent abuse, intimate partner violence, rape and sexual assault, hate-related attacks, and the violence of political persecution and war. A growing body of research reveals a direct connection between victimization and a wide array of health problems. The lasting effects of violence can also severely **curtail the capacity of adults and young people to participate successfully in education and training, achieve economic self-sufficiency, and engage with cultural and political life.** On a more personal level, abuse and trauma can scar relationships with partners, children, and friends.

Given this grim reality, it's easy to wonder how survivors can muster the strength to get involved in struggles for prevention, social change, and human rights. As has been the case in the U.S., medicalizing the issue puts emerg-

ing global grassroots movements to end gender-based violence at risk of being co-opted and constrained by the criminal justice sector, where ideas about appropriate responses to abuse typically preclude widespread political action.

The work of **Silence Speaks** suggests another way of looking at the bridge between individual healing and community action: that of viewing action itself as a vehicle for personal liberation. As Judith Herman writes, "We know that the women who recover most successfully (from trauma) are those who discover some meaning in their experience that transcends the limits of personal tragedy. Most commonly women find this meaning by joining with others in social action." (Herman, 1992)

In **South Africa**, social workers and therapists are in short supply, especially for those living in poverty. Political action, on the other hand -- given the legacy of the anti-Apartheid movement -- is viewed as a matter of necessity. Now entering its second decade of democracy, the country faces two major interconnected epidemics—violence against women and HIV/AIDS. Historically, violence against women has been viewed as a "private" matter. But the complicated relationship between the aftermath of Apartheid and now-exploding rates of gender-based violence has forced all sectors of society to look at how the construction of gender identities fuels both of these public health crises.

The **Men as Partners Network (MAP)** began in 1998 as a partnership of Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa and New York-based NGO EngenderHealth, to address the intersection between rigid gender roles, domestic and sexual violence, and HIV and AIDS in South Africa. **The Network calls on men to take a stand against violence, reduce their risk taking behaviors, and play an activist role in reducing the spread and impact of the epidemic** by numerous creative arts projects, including community murals, street theater, and photo essays. Digital storytelling sessions were a logical next step. The workshops have an explicit screening outcome:

stories would go up on the web and be used throughout the country in trainings and at community events. The MAP stories can be found online at <http://www.engenderhealth.org/ia/wwwm/wmmds.html>.

Article New vaccines preventing cervical cancer and new controversies

Presentation given by Ana Lita, at the invitation of Rachel Mayanja. Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on 6 June 2006 (Brownbag lunch seminar series)



Ana Lita, Ph.D. is the Director of the Appignani Center for Bioethics, an affiliate of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) in New York City. She holds a Ph.D. in Applied Ethics and Social Philosophy from Bowling Green State University, U.S. and an M.A. in Sociology through Lancaster University, UK. The author of numerous conference presentations, scholarly and popular publications in the fields of education, ethics and bioethics, Dr. Lita is recipient of a Soros Foundation Fellowship and a US National Association Fellowship for International Scholars.

Many people are developing a deeper appreciation of the bonds between human well-being and the unrelenting pace of technological advance. The recent growth in biotechnology raised many new bioethical questions which are often challenged by the conservative religious

values as well as the increasing public awareness of the biotechnologies themselves. While many such advancements offer new solutions to old problems, they have also spawned new possibilities for remaking our own lives and families—even our own societies. Concomitantly, biotechnological advancements have called into question the adequacy of our traditional societies. Today, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements help carve out, in various ways, the normative state of global ethics. Still, there are biomedical and scientific issues that, although they have been widely discussed, have not yet been appropriately addressed by persons well versed in both the science and the ethical theory involved. New vaccines are about to enter the market to prevent some of the 500, 000 deaths of women per year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) statistics. These deaths are mostly in developing countries, and may now be reduced IF the vaccine is deployed and used by women. This is where the ethical issues arise.

Q: *What is cervical cancer?*

A: Cervical cancer is cancer of the cervix, the lower portion of the uterus leading to the beginning portion of the vaginal canal. The cervix is the object of testing when a Pap smear is performed by detecting early pathologic, microscopic changes in cervical cells. The Pap smear allows for ongoing monitoring of such cells, which are the precursors to cancer.

Q: *What makes the cells abnormal?*

A: A virus called the **human papilloma virus** (HPV) causes cervical cells to become abnormal. It should be noted that there are many types of HPV, and only a few are sexually transmitted and are able to cause cervical cancer. In particular, HPV types 16 and 18 cause more than 70% of cervical cancer cases worldwide, while the other 30% of cases are due to less common HPV types (such as HPV-31, -33, -35, -39, -45, -51, -66).

Q: *Who gets cervical cancer?*

A: Cervical cancer is a disease that kills only women. It is impossible to develop cervical cancer without first being infected by HPV; but not all women who

are infected with HPV will develop cancer. In the USA, for example, 80% of all sexually active people have one or more HPV strains and about 20 million people are infected at any given time. However, because of routine Pap smear screening there are relatively few cervical cancer deaths. But globally, HPV causes the second-highest number of cancer deaths among women. A number of risk factors have been identified for cervical cancer. Women who begin having sexual intercourse before age 18 and have many sexual partners are at increased risk for cervical cancer. The relevance of sexual history has to do with the chance of infection with HPV. Other risk factors include exposure before birth to the drug diethylstilbestrol (DES), smoking, and immunosuppression (e.g. HIV infection). The highest estimated incidence rates of cervical cancer occur in Africa, Central and South America and Asia. Cervical cancer is the leading cause of death for middle-aged women in Latin America and it is number one cause of death in women in sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

The cervical cancer vaccine

- The HPV vaccine has the potential to dramatically lower deaths from cervical cancer. **Gardasil** by Merck approved on 8 June 2006, that protects against the two most common high-risk types of HPV (HPV-16 and HPV-18) as well as against two other virus types (HPV-6 and HPV-11) that cause 90% of genital wart cases; and Cervarix by GlaxoSmithKline's, that targets only HPV 16 and 18 and does not protect against genital warts. Merck is seeking approval for **Gardasil** for females ages 9-26 because the vaccine works best when given to women before they become sexually active. Early vaccination is important because Gardasil does not necessarily protect against viruses in people already infected before they get the vaccine.

Conservative objections

- Because the vaccines are most effective when given before women are sexually active, there is opposition from conservative quarters in the USA in the belief that the vaccines may encourage sexual activity in teens by promoting the view that premarital sex is safe. Others are concerned that abstinence programs may be attacked if this vac-

cine is promoted. A major difference between the future vaccines and other childhood vaccinations is that the latter effectively provides insurance against unforeseen environmental risks, while the former attempts to inoculate against risky personal behavior.

Other ethical issues

- Still, there are many unanswered questions like how should the vaccine be advertised and promoted in USA and by whom? How can the vaccine be promoted in developing world countries where the cervical cancer exerts its greatest burden? In the U.S. it is possible that many private citizens will be able to afford the vaccines, or local public health departments – or even the Federal government – could conceivably fund widespread vaccination initiatives. By contrast, the current projections of vaccine costs would be prohibitive for most developing world women. Moreover, many of the viral strains that cause cervical cancer in these countries are not covered by the current vaccines (though widespread deployment of the vaccines would still constitute a huge public health windfall). The knowledge about HIV has spurred an increase in screening efforts in the US, on top of which increased Pap smear testing has piggy-backed. The result has been a sharp decrease in cervical cancer in the USA, but not in the developing world. In these regions, women often receive no treatment for cancer and suffer terribly before dying. Who is going to pay the costs of vaccinating the young women of India, Africa and Latin America? There are a slew of other important, unanswered questions such will the vaccine be mandated as a part of other routine immunizations? Should sexually conservative parents be held morally or legally liable if they resist inoculation? How will the public react to the rare but inescapable instances of Gardasil-related medical complications? Which women should vaccinated first? Younger women entering the sex trade? When will they be vaccinated? Which vaccine will they get? There may be some answers to these last questions. The Center for Disease Control's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices will determine who should be vaccinated as soon as the FDA approves the drugs. It may recommend that preteen girls

be given the vaccine, or it may recommend that teenage girls be given the vaccine, but still this is a matter open to debate and subject to the waxing and waning opinions of the American public and indeed the world at large.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

The first large medical study of female genital **Study Group on Female Genital Mutilation and Obstetrical Outcome** published by the World Health Organization on 2 June 2006 stated that the procedure of cutting has deadly consequences when the women give birth, raising by more than 50 per cent the possibility that either the woman or her baby will die. More than 100 million women worldwide have undergone genital cutting, mostly in childhood, and often without anesthesia or sterile techniques. The procedure varies in severity, from country to country, and implies from full excision of the clitoris and labia to a lesser procedures where only the former is removed. The study was called a 'landmark and it is hoped that genital mutilation should now be included among critical health indices for less developed countries.

RECOMMENDED READING

- **The Motherhood Manifesto: What America's Moms Want--And What to Do About It** by Joan Blades and Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner. *Publisher:* Nation Books ISBN: 1560258845. Discusses very important issues for mothers and families in the USA that are not getting the attention they deserve. The authors believe that the general public is not getting enough information about what's really is happening with American mothers and families, such as: the 'mommy taxes'; what the Army pays per week for childcare and the national average cost of child care; infant mortality rates (USA tied for 38th place in the world with Estonia, Poland, Slovakia and the United Arab Emirates in 2003).

WEBSITES

- www.Interaction.org: The Diversity Challenge is an InterAction campaign to accelerate and guide progress on developing an inclusive organizational

culture and integrating diversity into organizations and programs.

- <http://www.unmikonline.org/civpol/gender/index.htm>: Brochure prepared by the Civilian Police Senior Gender Advisor in the UN Mission in Kosovo.
- <http://www.engenderhealth.org/ia/wwwm/wwwmds.html>: the Center for Digital Storytelling's Silence Speaks program offers offering digital storytelling workshops to survivors and witnesses of violence. These integrate autobiographical writing and digital media manipulation to assist people with little to no prior media-making experience in creating short digital videos, or "digital stories." The Men As Partners (MAP) Network and the Silence Speaks program have joined in an effort to bring digital storytelling to South African communities engaged in challenging violence against women and supporting HIV prevention. For more information about this digital storytelling initiative, contact Amy Hill (amylenita@storycenter.org).
- <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/asp/user/list.asp?Query=Gender%2C+Remittances>: **Gender, Remittances and Development: The case of women migrants from Vicente Noble, Dominican Republic**: the study uncovers that the money earned and sent by Dominican women migrant workers has empowered them as decision-makers; but traditional gender roles persist at home. It also highlights the importance of analyzing migration and remittances from a gender perspective. INSTRAW, 2006 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/asp/user/list.asp?Query=The+African+Gender+and+Development+Index>: **The African Gender and Development Index (AGDI)**: a tool that maps the extent of gender inequality in Africa and assesses government performance. It consists of two parts, the quantitative Gender Status Index (GSI) and the qualitative African Women's Progress Scoreboard (AWPS). Economic Commission for Africa, 2004
- <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/asp/user/list.asp?Query=2006+Report+on+the+global+AIDS+epidemic>: **2006 Report on the global AIDS epidemic**. This report includes country, regional and global estimates for the HIV and AIDS epidemic at the end of 2005 and 2003 (UNAIDS, 2006).

- <http://www.wwsf.ch/>: Women's World Summit Foundation quarterly e-News on developments and projects for the empowerment of women and children.
- <http://www.crisisgroup.org>: The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization, with nearly 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.
- <http://www.unfpa.org/swp>: State of World Population 2006 report prepared by UNFPA. It focuses on women and international migration.
- http://www.un-instraw.org/wiki/training/index.php/What_is_wiki%3F: INSTRAW is proud to introduce to you the first tool devoted to gender called WIKI, which belongs to all of us and give us the power to edit, add and share information.

With Wiki we can together ensure that our shared knowledge and information is relevant, current, correct and, most importantly, useful to ourselves and others.

The Gender Training Wiki contains a map displaying institutions offering gender trainings and upcoming trainings, a calendar with trainings in the pipeline, gender related training materials, a section for upcoming and online training courses on gender, and a directory of institutions offering training courses on gender. The flexibility and simplicity of the software means that, rather than e-mailing us with your latest publication or information on upcoming training courses, you can swiftly and easily add it to the Wiki, as the software is so dynamic. We hope that the Gender Training Wiki will continue to grow into a complete, up-to-date, and ever developing tool for gender training.

Trends in the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories in the Secretariat with appointments of one year or more, 30 June 1998 to 30 June 2006 (percentage)

Level	30-Jun-98	30-Jun-99	30-Jun-00	30-Jun-01	30-Jun-02	30-Jun-03	30-Jun-04	30-Jun-05	30-Jun-06	Change in percentage 2004-2006	Cumulative Change 1998-2006	Annual Average Change
USG	11.1	9.4	6.5	11.8	10.5	13.9	16.7	16.2	15.4	-1.3	4.3	0.54
ASG	13.0	14.3	11.5	10.8	12.5	15.0	17.1	18.8	21.2	4.0	8.2	1.03
D-2	18.8	21.6	20.8	17.9	21.6	24.7	27.6	26.7	30.4	2.9	11.6	1.45
D-1	23.7	28.1	29.3	30.1	28.7	28.9	32.3	29.9	25.3	-6.9	1.6	0.20
P-5	29.3	30.0	32.6	29.5	29.3	30.1	31.0	31.4	30.7	-0.3	1.4	0.18
P-4	32.3	33.7	33.5	31.4	31.4	31.5	34.1	34.6	35.9	1.8	3.6	0.45
P-3	39.4	39.5	40.2	36.9	38.0	39.9	41.5	41.0	41.4	-0.1	2.0	0.25
P-2	45.4	48.2	50.1	48.0	48.7	50.1	50.8	50.8	49.0	-1.9	3.6	0.45
P-1	64.3	77.8	50.0	60.6	63.2	63.6	83.3	100.0	100.0	16.7	35.7	4.46
TOTAL	34.60	35.80	36.50	34.60	34.90	35.70	37.37	37.10	37.43	0.06	2.83	0.35

Source: Office of Human Resources Management.

The following letter was sent on 7 April, 2006 to members of the Secretary General's **Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the fields of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and Environment** from: Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Excellencies,

In the recent Secretary General's report "Mandating and Delivering: analysis and recommendations to facilitate review of mandates" he notes his intention to ask the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence to include in its work an assessment on how gender equality, including through gender mainstreaming, can be better and more fully addressed in the work of the United Nations, particularly in its operational activities on the ground.

We welcome this decision by the Secretary-General and stress that it is urgent for the High-Level Panel to consider how the UN can deliver on the commitments repeatedly made for gender equality and women's empowerment.

It is clear that if these commitments are to be met, there needs to be a major up- scaling of the power and authority as well as resources dedicated to this agenda. While at this time, we are not endorsing any specific proposal, there must be an immediate decision to undertake a serious and comprehensive assessment of the needs regarding both women's machineries and gender mainstreaming as part of the work of the Coherence Panel. Proposals to date include among others, to establish a new women's agency with a broad mandate on gender equality (building on UNFPA and UNIFEM) with substantial resources at the global and country levels. The same commitments to innovation and effectiveness by member states on other issues should be brought to the discussion of gender equality and women's human rights.

Women's machineries within the UN remain under-resourced and marginalized from the main activities and policies on development, humanitarian affairs and environment, as well as from human rights and peacekeeping, at the operational and the policy levels. While gender is cross-cutting, gender mainstreaming can only succeed if it is done in collaboration with powerful well-resourced separate women's units that are driving this agenda, monitoring and innovating as well as advocating for it continuously.

The Coherence panel must integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue into its program of work and make strong recommendations in its final report for more effective UN mechanisms to achieve gender equality in development, humanitarian affairs, and environment, as well as in human rights and peacekeeping.

We stand ready to work with you and hope to have an opportunity to meet with you when the panel next convenes.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Bunch, CWGL

June Zeitlin, WEDO

Jill Sternberg, WILPF UN Office

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