



# Network

The UN Women's Newsletter, Volume No. 10, Issue 1 January, February and March 2009



## INTERVIEW WITH PAMELA K. AGNONE

Senior Vice President, Retail Services  
United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU)



Pamela K. Agnone is the Senior Vice President of Retail Services at UNFCU. She directs the activities of the Credit Union's Retail Services Division, encompassing branch and representative office administration, consumer and mortgage lending, Call Centre and website fulfillment, and Investment and Insurance Centres. Ms. Agnone has over 20 years of financial services experience, including senior management roles with two New York thrift institutions. Ms. Agnone received a Bachelor's of Arts degree magna cum laude in Business Administration, concentration in Management and Marketing from Long Island University, NY, and a Master's of Business Administration in Banking and Finance from Hofstra University, NY. Ms. Agnone, her husband and three sons reside in the United States.

*Q: Women are making important financial decisions for themselves and/or for their families. What are the life changes women face which make it crucial for them to learn how to make good financial decisions?*

*A:* It is never too early (or too late) for women to learn how to make good financial decisions. Beginning when a young woman asserts her independence either with the start of university studies, or by helping to manage a household budget together with her family, knowing the importance of saving, monitoring spending, borrowing judiciously and timely repayment are all important life skills that set the foundation for future sound financial decision-making. Too frequently, a woman in the prime of her life is faced with

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unforeseen circumstances, such as the death of a partner or spouse, a divorce or even the loss of employment. The stress of these particularly difficult situations is further compounded by a lack of knowledge about how the household expenses are paid, mounting credit card debt or the complete absence of a financial plan. It is imperative for women to take advantage of all available resources to become effectively “financially self-

assured” and in this way be best prepared for life’s unpleasant surprises.

**Q:** *What financial strategies could you impart to women during the current economic situation?*

**A:** Remain positive and take action. Strategies range from simply getting a better grip on your routine spending habits, establishing a systematic savings

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## Letter from the Focal Point for Women

Welcome to our first 2009 quarterly issue of Network. In this issue we bring you information that we hope will assist and encourage your own efforts as advocates of gender equality.

First, in view of the current global economic crisis, this office interviewed Pamela K. Agnone, Senior Vice President, Retail Services of the United Nations Federal Credit Union. She enlightens with practical ways of dealing with our finances. It is with pride that we feature her as a female leader in the financial field, inspiring us with her thoughts, experiences and lessons learned as she rose up the ladder in a male-dominated career.

Second, because competitiveness becomes an increasing concern in tough economic times, you will find a summary of the panel discussion on flexibility in the workplace, organized to celebrate International Women’s Day 2009. The panelists stressed that experience across industry almost unequivocally bears out the benefits to productivity, work/life fit and retention of flexibility in the workplace for both the employee and the employer. Consequently, the current trend is to remove flexible work options from the realm of perks to that of a routinely available work method part of essential business strategy.

Also interesting is a summary of the round-table discussion of “Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making Processes” hosted by Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of the Special Adviser for Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, in preparation of International Women’s Day. We highlight the messages of the speakers—from the good practices promulgated by Rwandan women after the genocide to other ways in which progress in decision-making can be accelerated. Also, the panel featured the human interest story of an Indian woman who freed herself through her persistence from the rigid family tradition going on to attain an education and dream of ways to empower other women.

Finally, this issue contains a piece on a newly created UN database on violence against women as well as an article on “Men join campaign to end violence against women” by Stephanie Urdang.

Ms. Urdang wrote the article for the United Nations Africa Renewal magazine. Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon stated during International Women’s Day, “violence against women is an attack on all of us, on the foundation of our civilization”. We cannot accept that women suffer violence and must join hands to eliminate it. Please join in advocacy against it.

Enjoy our first 2009 issue of Network.

In solidarity,



Aparna Mehrotra

## INTERVIEW WITH PAMELA K. AGNONE *(continued from p. 2)*

plan to build an emergency cash reserve and scheduling time with your financial advisor to review your financial plan. In my household, in addition to routine payments such as our mortgage and car payments, we have college and high school tuition payments for three sons, which will be increasing in the near term as our two younger sons finish high school and join their older brother at university. I didn't necessarily panic as the stock market continued its rapid descent, but I did review our household spending patterns and looked for ways to cut back. I also heard with frequent regularity from my UNFCU Financial Advisor, who also suggested ways to take some defensive actions while not deviating materially from our overall financial plan.

To get a really good picture of your spending habits, I suggest keeping a journal of all your spending for a period of one month and review it with your monthly credit card and account statements. Consider what are routine spending items, such as groceries, mortgage loan payments/rent, and childcare and also what are impulse purchases. Ask yourself, did I really need to join the gym, or can I exercise at home? Do we have to eat out at restaurants several times a week? If you had not, how much money would you have saved? In difficult economic times, the potential is high for a partner in the household to lose their employment. To manage your household budget effectively and withstand the loss of income for what could be several months, it is best to have a cash reserve equal to at least 6 months of your monthly household obligations. Establishing a systematic savings plan where a set amount that you determine is automatically deposited into a separate savings account should start immediately.

Today's global financial markets are particularly volatile, making it even more difficult for common investors to know what action to take—if any at all. Working with an experienced financial advisor is critical to preserving your investment assets and achieving your life goals. A financial advisor can meet with you initially to understand your long-range goals, your appetite for risk and help you gauge current market events and their impact on your plan. Developing a relationship with the advisor takes more than just one meeting and you must come prepared with account statements and other related documentation so that the advisor can do the job well for you. A comprehensive financial plan tailored specifically for you should be the outcome of your meetings. Based on your particular plan, the

financial advisor can recommend the best course of action. Financial planning is not merely investing; it incorporates systematic saving, risk management, long-term care insurance considerations, insurance needs, estate planning and tax advice. A trusted financial advisor may be an expert at one or more of these programmes and will also have ready access to an extensive network of professionals within a particular area of expertise.

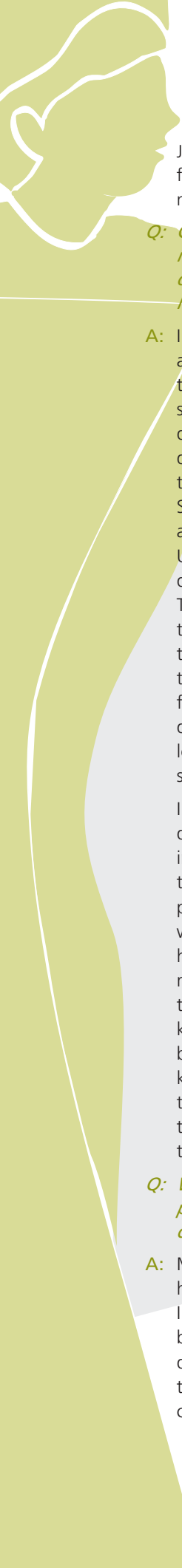
**Q:** *What attributes do you bring as an effective female leader in the financial sector?*

**A:** Looking back over the course of my 25-year career in financial services, I think the professional traits that have served me well include expressing my point-of-view while taking the time to listen and consider the opinions of others when taking a decision, asking questions to gain insight and understanding, sensing the unique interests and needs that motivate various individuals and incorporating that information into my managerial style. I also enjoy a challenge and will work hard to achieve the desired result. I think I have taken juggling the work/life balance to an art form and, as a result, I am greatly aware of the pressures of working full time, traveling extensively and raising a family. I appreciate the sacrifices staff makes to work the hours needed for the Credit Union to run smoothly, but I also do not like to see anyone burn out. My perspective then takes that into consideration when managing staff.

The financial services sector is currently transforming itself right before our eyes. Social networking, such as blogs, podcasts and YouTube, as a mode for information gathering and as a means of influencing consumer behaviour is significant, particularly among our younger members. The pace of technology as a vehicle to move and manage funds is staggering. The attributes that have served me well in the past are changing and keeping up-to-date with current trends in each of these areas is essential and challenging. To this end, my sons found it oddly curious when I recently joined Facebook and invited them to be my friend. I've only gotten one of the three to accept, but I'm still working on the other two.

**Q:** *How can women educate themselves about investments?*

**A:** A first step would be to arrange a meeting with a financial advisor. Attend educational seminars provided by your credit union or other financial institutions (if offered). Read the business section of the Wall Street



Journal or other business periodicals. Subscribe for financial news eAlerts, review Yahoo Finance and network with your colleagues in finance.

*Q: Could you share with our readers some lessons in leadership in the financial area? Are there different ways of developing male/female leaders?*

**A:** I have been described by staff (male and female alike) as “tough, but fair” and I am content with that. The “tough” part to me means setting high standards and managing people to achieve the desired result. I have a team of extremely well-qualified and committed managers who truly desire to serve our membership in the best way possible. So, I start with a group that believes in the mission and enjoys carrying out the initiatives supporting UNFCU’s strategy. The hardest and most important decisions I make are in fact hiring decisions. There are plenty of candidates with the requisite technical experience, but are they “hard wired” to deliver exceptional service? Do they have or are they capable of maintaining a “global context” for service and are they results oriented? A hiring decision particularly in the management ranks has long-term implications. Don’t settle; continue the search for the right person.

I do not believe there are stereotypical ways of developing male or female leaders. People are unique individuals and I have learned through the years that each person will be motivated differently. Some people are quietly effective and are uncomfortable when the limelight is cast upon them, others require heaps of praise, the more public the better—but, no matter the means, all people like to know when they are doing a good job and most would rather know early and constructively why they might be missing the mark. With the level of expertise, knowledge and commitment of our team, I find that empowering individuals to make decisions for their business unit and being held accountable for the results is most important.

*Q: What are your views regarding equal participation of women and men in economic decision-making processes and positions?*

**A:** My view is that if you are a stakeholder, you should have a voice and be able to influence the decision. I think an organization should strive for gender balance but not at the expense of selecting the most qualified individual for a position. This may mean that the search takes longer or that a bigger investment in career development for qualified internal candidates

is considered in order to maintain the gender balance. About one-third of the senior management ranks at UNFCU is comprised of women and five years ago this figure was 25 per cent. Women manage our Representative Offices in Vienna and Nairobi, as well as the UN Secretariat Branch in New York. All of them arrived at their current level through hard work, a commitment to the Credit Union and its members and continuously learning.

*Q: During your career at UNFCU did you experience a glass ceiling? If so, how did you manage to overcome it?*

**A:** I just celebrated my 10th year anniversary with the Credit Union. So much has changed over the past decade with the opening of Representative Offices in Geneva, Nairobi and a third in Rome to complement our office in Vienna and the rapid growth of members and staff to best meet the needs of our members. With heartfelt honesty, I can say there was never any glass ceiling I had to break. I advanced early and was given many opportunities over the years to develop professionally. I continue to learn. The work environment at UNFCU is of the utmost in professionalism. Considering my entire career, spanning several organizations, I admire and respect my Credit Union colleagues most of all. Do we always agree on everything? No, of course not. But the environment is such that you can express yourself, be heard and influence an outcome. I suppose if ever I were in a situation where I perceived that my opportunities for professional development and upward mobility were restricted, I would first try objectively to assess my skills and contributions versus my peers, identify any gaps and work towards filling them either by volunteering to take on a new project for the experience or becoming more educated about a particular subject matter. I believe the most important course of action is to have open and honest dialogue with your manager to explain your willingness to take on more or different responsibilities and to receive constructive feedback about what could be holding you back.

*Q: Why do you think women in leadership positions, i.e., in the finance area, make a difference in the working environment? How do you feel about mentoring and training in advancing women’s careers?*

**A:** I do think women in leadership positions make a difference in the work environment since they can be vocal, express a different point of view and

increase sensitivity around work/life balance for all families. Issues such as telecommuting, child and elder care are frequently championed by females in an organization. These benefits are extended to all and the entire organization can participate. (We have seen that work quite effectively at UNFCU.) In many dual-income households with children, although the parenting is shared, frequently the primary responsibility for interacting with teachers, caregivers, pediatricians, Parent Teacher Associations and the like falls to Mom. Working mothers in leadership roles are sensitive to the time these activities take and can allow for more flexibility for staff—male or female—to balance these family needs with work demands.

Mentoring applies to all staff members—not just females—that are willing to commit the time and energy towards advancing their careers. A junior staff member can receive constructive feedback and learn to emulate positive behaviours for desired results. I would encourage staff to seek out a network of colleagues or senior staff members who are well perceived in the organization and who are effective. For the price of a cup of coffee, you can learn more about organizational politics, the best way to construct your business case or how to get a good idea put into a formal plan for action.

Through networking and mentoring, women can learn about the resources available to them to become financially fit and independent.

*Q: You continue to work in an environment that is mostly masculine. How does this gender imbalance define the paradigm? How should it be changed to suit women better?*

*A:* While I may work in an environment that is mostly masculine, the corporate culture of the Credit Union is one which values and embraces all forms of diversity. Interestingly, I have observed when there is a lack of gender diversity either way in a department it detracts from the effectiveness of the group overall. The best model for women to follow is one that incorporates gender diversity at all levels and creates an environment where women feel confident to express their views in a professional way in order to be heard and recognized.

*Q: What advice would you give to other women and what gives you the most personal satisfaction?*

Speak up, ask questions, seek advice—from colleagues or other professionals—and take charge of your financial affairs. Do not over analyse issues, go with what you know and take advice from others you trust who are experienced. I have drawn a great

deal of personal satisfaction from my career and I have made some personal tradeoffs and sacrifices along the way, but what gives me the greatest pleasure is that delicate balance between work and raising three sons who will come into the workplace with a much different perception of what their female colleagues are quite capable of undertaking . . . and realizing. They know because they watched their mom. ■

## CONGRATULATIONS TO . . .

- New Zealand's former Prime Minister **Ms. Helen Clark's** nomination by Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon as the **Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP) for a four-year term following consultations with the Executive Board of UNDP. Helen Clark has been a member of the Parliament of New Zealand since 1981 and was the country's Prime Minister from 1999 to 2008. She has been a leader in her country on economic, social, cultural and environmental issues and international relations. A vigorous advocate of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), she has supported her country's biodiversity, health care and gender equity in employment.
- **Ambassador Sylvie Lucas** of Luxembourg for her election on 15 January 2009 as the 65th **President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council** (ECOSOC). She becomes the second female President of the 54-member body. During the opening of the organizational session ECOSOC, Ms. Lucas emphasized the need to strengthen the quality of the Council and to achieve more relevant work on development. She also called for a more action-oriented Council.
- **Ms. Karin Landgren** (Sweden) for her appointment as the Secretary-General's **Representative in Nepal and Head of UNMIN** on 3 February 2009. She will start heading the Mission at the end of Ian Martin's assignment (the current Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Nepal) and the adoption of Security Council resolution 1864 (2009). Ms. Landgren has had a long career in the UN in the fields of politics, management and international law. She has been the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Nepal

since September 2008. She also served UNHCR as country representative to Eritrea, Singapore and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as UNICEF's head of Child Protection.

- Academy Award-winning actress **Mira Sovino** for her appointment on 12 February 2009 as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) **Goodwill Ambassador to Combat Human Trafficking**. She has supported UNODC's anti-trafficking efforts since 2007 and was nominated as a Golden Globe Award nominee for her performance in the miniseries entitled Human Trafficking. The series is about an agent going undercover to stop an organization from trafficking people, and shows the struggles of three trafficked women. It premiered in the United States on Lifetime Television on 24 October 2005 and later aired on CityTV in several major Canadian markets.<sup>1</sup> Ms. Sovino was honoured with the Amnesty International's Artist of Conscience Award given to individuals who have achieved philanthropic and humanitarian undertakings. ■

## SPECIAL FAREWELL

**Dr. Lucille Mathurin Mair**, a citizen of Jamaica with several international experiences, an outstanding service as a diplomat, scholar and an activist for women's rights, passed away on 28 January 2009. She was the Secretary-General's Advisor to UNICEF on Women's Development and Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Palestine from 1982 to 1987 and then was appointed to the post of Permanent Representative for Jamaica to the United Nations. She has served her country of Jamaica as Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senator. A strong advocate for women in the Caribbean region, she worked to advance the lives of women in the Caribbean as the regional coordinator of the Women and Development Studies Unit of the University of Western Indies where she continued her involvement with women's progress during her post-retirement years as the first head of its Women and Development Programme.

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_Trafficking\\_\(TV\\_miniseries\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Trafficking_(TV_miniseries))

## PANEL DISCUSSION ON WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY

### CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 5 March 2009

Office of the Special Adviser for Gender Issues  
and Advancement of Women: Panel Discussion  
on Workplace Flexibility and Productivity

**WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY  
AND PRODUCTIVITY:  
Strategic Business Models across Industry and Organizations**

**Ms. Rachel Mayanja**  
Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

Invites you to a panel discussion  
for men and women, managers and staff.  
On the occasion of International Women's Day

Thursday, 5 March 2009  
1:15 - 2:45 pm  
Conference Room 3

**Moderator:**  
Aparna Mehrotra, Focal Point for Women, United Nations

**Speakers:**  
Cali Williams Yost, CEO, Work+Life Fit, Inc.  
Deborah Epstein Henry, Founder & President Flex-Time Lawyers LLC  
Brad Harrington, Executive Director Boston College's Centre for Work and Family  
Barbara A. Taylor, General Counsel BDO Seidman LLP

### WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY: Strategic Business Models across Industries and Organizations

On 5 March 2009, International Women's Day, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women/Office of the Focal Point for Women (OSAGI/OFPW) hosted a panel discussion on flexibility and productivity in the workplace. The symposium focused on the panelists' answers to a series of commonly asked questions concerning flexibility in the workplace. The event was moderated by Ms. Aparna Mehrotra, the Focal Point for Women at the United Nations.

The distinguished members of the panel included (from left to right below):



**Cali Williams Yost,**

CEO and founder of Work+Life Fit, Inc.;

**Brad Harrington,**

Executive Director of the Boston College Center for Work & Family;

**Aparna Mehrotra,**

Focal Point for Women, OSAGI/DESA,  
Moderator of Panel Discussion;

**Barbara Taylor,** a partner at BDO Seidman;

**Deborah Epstein Henry,**

founder and President of Flexi-Time Lawyers.

Ms. Mehrotra began the proceedings by pointing out that flexible work arrangements did not, and should not, apply exclusively to women. Given technological advances, the state of the global economy and the shifting of familial gender roles, flexible work arrangements highly benefited not only both male and female employees, but their employers as well.

She reminded the audience that “Our facts, our legislation, our spirit . . . all support the issue of flexibility and, because of this, we have promulgated policies in 2003 on this matter”. However, according to statistics, 2,410 United Nations staff members had flexible work arrangements in 2004; however, in 2008, the number had dropped to 1,137. She attributed that drop to a lack of implementation of existing policy on flexible work arrangements (ST/SGB/2003/4 of 24 January 2003). Ms. Mehrotra pointed out that, unfortunately, many United Nations employees were not aware that flexible work arrangements even existed. It was now time for United Nations employees to utilize those arrangements and for managers to recognize the benefits. Ms. Mehrotra identified the following objectives of the panel discussion:

- To bring allies to the cause of flexibility and productivity, enlightening each one with an effective weapon called “information”.

- To call upon the audience to believe in the issue and to become advocates for flexibility making life better within the organization and outside of it.

## PANEL QUESTIONS

A member of the panel asked why flexibility was an important business strategy for organizations to be productive and profitable.

Deborah Epstein Henry stated that flexibility had become more necessary because of four converging factors:

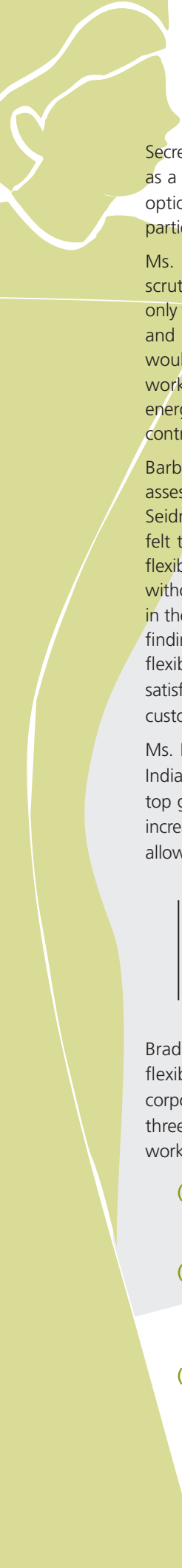
- (1) Increased work demands;
- (2) Increased demands at home and in the community;
- (3) Globalization of work brought about by new technology; and
- (4) Generational shifts.

Increased demands at work were partially caused by the rise of the global economy and were made possible by recent technologies that allowed for instant communication. Competing in a global economy meant being available to meet demands from all time zones—traditional office hours no longer applied. In an era of globalization, flexibility was the key to success. Flexible work arrangements allowed employees to make better use of their time so they could meet increasing productivity standards at work while simultaneously meeting increased demands from family and community.

Ms. Epstein Henry also pointed out that it was not only the tech-savvy “Generation Y” demanding flexible options. Baby boomers were pushing to “phase into retirement” slowly, over periods of five to ten years, due to the impact of recent economic developments on their retirement savings.

As proof of the relationship between flexibility and productivity, Ms. Epstein Henry cited a 2005 study by the Bold Initiative which found that 10 companies had increased their productivity by 5 to 10 per cent merely by implementing flexibility options for their employees.

Cali Williams Yost built on Ms. Epstein Henry’s assertions by saying that flexibility was no longer just an option for employees, but was fast becoming “a way of operating” or a “business strategy” for companies. Companies that effectively utilized flexibility could not only increase their productivity, but also decrease their operating costs by saving on rental space and utilities. Organizations that were moving to another location, like the United Nations



Secretariat due to the renovation plans, could use flexibility as a cost-saving measure. Furthermore, providing flexible options gave employers a way to retain their talent—particularly individuals who were considering retirement.

Ms. Williams Host emphasized that the outputs and scrutiny applied to non-telecommuting staff would be only the same as that applied to non-telecommuting staff, and that no additional layers or frequency of reporting would be added. Finally, she noted that many flexible work arrangements decreased commuter traffic and energy usage—meaning that a flexible business could also contribute to environmental sustainability.

Barbara Taylor shared her findings from the recent assessment and implementation of flexibility at BDO Seidman. The assessment found that male employees felt they had not been given the same opportunities for flexibility that female employees had. Similarly, employees without families felt they had been offered less flexibility in the workplace than employees with families. Given this finding, BDO Seidman had implemented a company-wide flexibility strategy. The strategy created more employee satisfaction, and, in addition, helped employees to assist customers better—leading to greater client satisfaction.

Ms. Mehrotra closed the discussion by pointing out that India's Information System had been able to become a top global competitor in its field primarily because of the increased retention and motivation of employees who were allowed to work off site.

**A member of the panel asked if others had noticed any particular effective managerial styles that allowed leaders to transform a culture of rigidity into a culture of flexibility.**

Brad Harrington began the discussion by noting that flexibility demonstrated a company's commitment to corporate social responsibility. He added that there were three ways in which social responsibility was related to work life:

- (1) The way a company treated its employees was the primary indicator of whether it would be perceived as socially responsible;
- (2) The opportunities an organization extended to its employees to spend time with their families and do community work, which directly benefited society; and
- (3) The use of flexibility programmes that were ways of "going green" as they reduced commuting time.

He also pointed out that flexible work arrangements could be implemented in any organization.

Mr. Harrington emphasized that the problem with leadership lay in the fact that many leaders tended to be workaholics who were "dominated by their career identity", and that most junior employees took their cues as to what an organization expected from the example of their superiors. In order for the employees to feel comfortable asking for flexible arrangements, those leaders needed to support flexible options consistently which acknowledges that "they may have made choices that are different from the choices they expect from others".

Barbara Taylor stated that BDO Seidman made a point of engaging their leadership in a number of ways from creation to development to implementation of a flexibility strategy. The major breakthrough with the leadership's acceptance of the programme occurred when they realized that flexibility was not only a programme for formal arrangements with certain employees but was a force that benefited management as well. Once the leaders of BDO realized "this is something that is actually benefiting me" their engagement with, and acceptance of, the programme became much stronger.

Deborah Epstein Henry next addressed how there had been a stigma attached to workers who engaged in flexible arrangements. There were perceptions that "These individuals who avail themselves of the policies don't get the good assignments. They're suddenly not on the promotion track. They're not getting the same access to clients. They're not being paid commensurate with what their delivery of work is."

Her solution to this problem was an echo of Mr. Harrington's "Leadership by example." She also argued that it was vital for organizations to have a written policy in place so employees could consider their flexibility options whether or not they used them.

This policy also had to include a monitoring system to ensure that flexible workers were paid and promoted according to their work and that substantial assignments were given with the expectation that those assignments would be efficiently completed. Finally, the written policy must also include a training programme to ensure that employees who used flexible arrangements made the most of the time spent out of the office and their work did not suffer.

Ms. Mehrotra concluded the discussion with a quote from Colin Powell, when he was asked to give advice to Hillary Clinton who had been nominated to become U.S. Secretary of State. Colin Powell said: "Go to bed early. . .



The electronic age has fundamentally changed the way in which we do business in every aspect of human life, but in diplomacy and politics as well—instantaneous transmission of information, instantaneous knowledge . . .” Mr. Powell had challenged his staff to use search engines and consult Wikipedia to check changes in countries. He had noted that he had been a workaholic and it had been his practice to work from home “. . . so that I could get some rest and also so my staff could get some rest”. One of his first acts had been to install 44,000 thousand computers in the State Department so that his staff could catch up with the times and individuals would be able to work from any location, not necessarily the office of the State Department. Colin Powell had worked 24 hours a day, but he hadn’t thought it necessary to work sitting in the State Department. Ms. Mehrotra emphasized that this story would provide an excellent argument for employees who sought flexible arrangements from their bosses, because leaders “won’t question the credential or the character of General Powell, where they might yours as an advocate”.

**A member of the panel wondered how the work/life flexibility issue had cut across different constituencies and what the motivations of the different constituencies were with respect to this issue.**

Cali Yost noted the difficulty of categorizing constituencies because there were commonalities as well as differences among all groups. She divided the constituencies according to age.

- First, she addressed the youngest group of workers (people under the age of 30), noting that they thought and operated very differently from previous generations, that they knew what technology was available to them and that there was no need for them to be on site every day for work.
- The next group of workers was comprised of those who were raising families and caring for their elderly parents, those who had commitments, schedules and responsibilities outside of work that had to be met, but who also knew that their professional productivity must not suffer.
- The last group was the older workers who were transforming the retirement process as they began to demand flexible arrangements to ease themselves into retirement.

Ms. Williams Yost said, “All these demographics will look into flexibility to creatively manage different areas in their lives”.

Brad Harrington agreed with Ms. Williams Yost’s assertions concerning workers of the retirement age, stating that retirement might even become a thing of the past if the economy continued to weaken, and that studies had found that it was easier for people to maintain psychological health if they had steady work. He asserted that retirement-aged workers were looking for flexible, part-time and seasonal employment opportunities. He also pointed out that the demographics of the family had changed radically in the previous 30 years. At that point, 75 per cent of couples in the U.S. were dual-career couples, and 28 per cent of households in the U.S. were headed by a single parent. Given those changes, Mr. Harrington predicted that families absolutely required flexibility in order to meet their needs.

Ms. Mehrotra concluded the discussion by pointing out that it was estimated that if 200 United Nations staff members (of the 8,000 to be moved under the Capital Master Plan) were willing to telecommute, there would be a \$10 million savings. The money that could be saved by flexible practices could be used to increase productivity. Alternatively, given the current economic situation, the savings might need to be used in other ways. According to Ms. Mehrotra, “This is a bad time, but it’s a good opportunity for unconventional agendas.”

**The panel questioned what exactly the face of flexibility was and how flexibility was being instituted above and beyond telecommuting.**

Brad Harrington began by defining the different types of flexible arrangements:

- Flex time: workers were able to alter their start and stop times.
- Telecommuting: full-time workers did not have to report to an office every day.
- Compressed work weeks: people worked a little extra time during each day of the week in order to expand their weekends.
- Job sharing: two people worked part-time to take on a full-time job.
- Reduced hours: employees could decrease their weekly hours and receive less pay as a result, without being marginalized.

- Seasonal work: workers would put in hours only during certain times of the year.
- Flexible career paths: employers opened up new and customized career opportunities for workers.
- Phased retirement: an employees could put in fewer hours for a few years prior to retirement, rather than quitting their jobs entirely.

Ms. Epstein Henry stated the two guiding principles of individual's flexible work options:

- (1) The individual's creativity and that of his/her employer; and
- (2) A win-win situation that benefited the employee and his/her colleagues at the workplace, the employer and the clients of the company.

In addition, she outlined the five things that were important to individuals in their satisfaction with their arrangement:

- (1) Flexibility on how they performed their assigned work;
- (2) Predictability of and control over their assigned work;
- (3) A reasonable and manageable number of hours;
- (4) Ability to set aside certain hours of unavailability; and
- (5) Location or where employees wanted to work.

"If you don't fit in one of those boxes that Mr. Harrington mentioned", Ms. Epstein Henry asserted, "think of a creative solution . . . and design a win-win so that it's in the interest of the United Nations but is also working for you and your family."

Cali Yost agreed that employees needed to think creatively when determining the flexibility arrangement that would provide them with a good work + life fit, and noted that sometimes employees "get boxed in by the policy and don't think creatively". She quoted a female U.S. Navy Admiral who had stood up in a workshop and had said:

"Just thinking this through and being creative about what we do on the ship and the different job capacities that we all have, I can already see different ways that we can all work. And not only can I run my ship better, but the people who work on my ship can have a better work/life fit . . . Everything is not going to work in the same place in the same way on the ship, but I see that different types of

flexibility can work in different jobs." (It was not clear how flexitime could work on a ship at sea, with, presumably, no telecommuting.)

The Focal Point for Women concluded the discussion by describing another form of flexible work arrangement that created a win-win situation for organizations and their employees. For example, different departments in the United Nations had "peak periods of work" when employees were expected to work 50 to 70 hours a week. Employers could decrease employee burnout and also decrease their payroll by making sure that employees worked less during non-peak times. That way, employees would average 40-hour weeks over the course of a year. Managers should be convinced of the value of such a project and have instructions issued. Heads of departments, however, would have to be convinced first.

**Ms. Mehrotra then opened up the discussion to questions from the floor.**

## QUESTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

A member of the audience wondered how the United Nations could be made more flexible. It seemed pretty rigid—open only from 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Ms. Mehrotra pointed out that even when the United Nations was not open for business, people were still working, some of them around the clock and on weekends. It was because so many United Nations employees were overworked that flexibility was an issue of importance. That was also why flexibility required creative solutions for seemingly rigid situations. She asserted that the best way to make the United Nations more flexible would be to introduce practices that accommodated flexible work environments. Once the practice was instituted, employees would become more accustomed to using their options and managers' attitudes towards employees who used flexible arrangements would become more positive. That arrangement was a reflection of humanism for which the United Nations stood.

Another participant addressed a question to Ms. Taylor, about the research that had found that men and childless workers had more problems with work balance issues, and wondered why that was so since one would think that it would be mothers with children.

Ms. Taylor's responded by stating that her data had been taken from employees' perceived satisfaction with their work, and had not addressed the validity or cause of those perceptions. She said, however, that one possible explanation would be because men and childless workers had felt less comfortable asking for flexible work arrangements because their reasons had not been as socially valid.

Brad Harrington agreed. He then pointed out that the most progressive employers did not want to know the reason behind an employee's desire for flexibility. Those employers knew that it was not up to them to judge the social validity of an employee's needs. Rather, the organization needed to know whether and how the arrangement would work so that the employee met his/her responsibilities.

An audience member found it interesting to hear that employers did not ask why their employees needed a flexible arrangement. In this person's experience, the supervisor must give his/her approval before a request for flexible work could go forward. And, because of the bureaucracy, many people didn't want to start with the process. The questioner could not be sure that this Organization was even at the stage where children were an acceptable reason to ask for a flexible arrangement. The audience member then asked how the "prove-your-case" attitude toward flexible work arrangements could be changed.

Mr. Harrington redefined his earlier assertion, stating that even in progressive companies that did not want to know the reason behind the request for a flexible arrangement, the employees still had to make a case for the arrangement. Rather than saying: "I need this because," the employee should be making a case that argued his/her ability to perform satisfactorily in a flexible arrangement.

Cali Yost supported that argument, saying that she had also seen companies not take the "why do you need this" approach as it had become clear that the approach had allowed managers' biases to cloud their judgement. It removed that stigma from the person with the care responsibility, and removed that bias from the conversation. Deborah Epstein Henry pointed out that a great deal of a company's willingness to work on a flexible arrangement had to do with an employee's talent and skill. If the company received value from an employee, then it would be more willing to compromise to meet the employee's needs. Otherwise, the company risked losing its talented

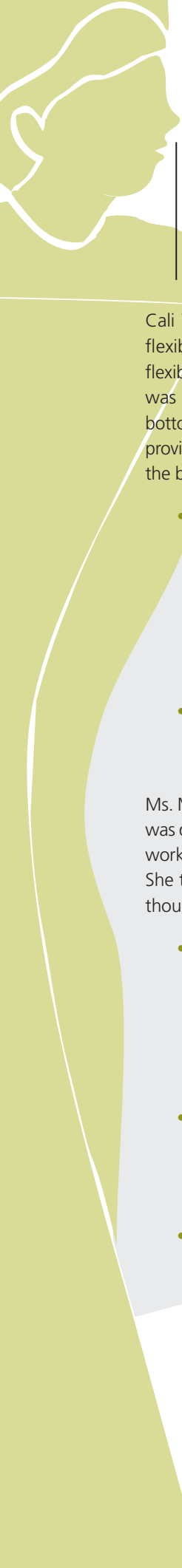
employees. As advocates for flexibility, staff members should take the opportunity to prove to the United Nations that flexible arrangements would improve productivity.

A member of the audience who had worked at the United Nations for 20 years and had experience 75-hour work weeks knew about burnout and brownout. Although the United Nations did have a policy for flexibility in the ST/SGB/2003/4 on flexible work arrangements, the problem was trying to get through to the programme managers who felt that a staff member was working only when sitting at his/her desk. Under those circumstances, the questioner wanted to know how to convince managers that staff would be better off in a flexible arrangement.

Deborah Epstein Henry answered by reiterating that her company had helped change managerial attitudes toward flexible work arrangements by engaging leaders in the process of creating, developing and implementing the flexible work programme and simultaneously educating the leadership to alleviate negative attitudes and biases. The company had also found success when it had convinced leaders that allowing for flexible arrangements had been an important, innovative and profitable business strategy.

Ms. Mehrotra, the moderator, added that she had witnessed divisions and departments where the "power and culture of control" of the leadership did not allow for employees to engage in flexible arrangements that truly suited them, and that the Secretary-General had called for a new assessment that would monitor which flexible arrangements were being used. In this way, she hoped it would be possible to identify objectively which departments were providing only pseudo-flexibility. Concerning managers who felt that they would lose control of their employees if the employees were not in the office, she stated that it was important gently to point out "that the person who is responsible will work anywhere and the person who is irresponsible will work nowhere."

A staff member pointed out that the United Nations must update the 2003 bulletin of the Secretary-General to garner an attitude of acceptance toward flexible work arrangements in corporate culture. The language was too non-committal; because it gave the department heads discretionary power to grant flexibility.



Instead, she suggested that the language of the bulletin should focus on the cost-benefit analysis of flexible arrangements, and show how flexible arrangements could make the Organization more effective.

Cali Yost applauded the staff member's attitude toward flexible arrangements, reiterating her statement that flexibility was not an accommodation for employees, but was actually an efficient business strategy with broad bottom-line and operational impact. Deborah Epstein Henry provided a few ideas about how to help build a case to have the bulletin (or any policy on flexibility) revised by:

- Running a pilot programme of flexibility in a department of the organization and using it to show that work quality and employee accessibility could be maintained or improved in an unconventional working arrangement. After a successful pilot run, it would be easier to argue that the practice should be implemented in other departments.
- Finding people who were already using flexible arrangements and interviewing them and celebrating their success.

Ms. Mehrotra agreed with the staff member, stating that it was difficult to run cost-benefit analyses but that they were working to conduct surveys and support implementation. She then concluded the panel discussion with these final thoughts:

- A major obstacle in implementing flexibility was existing cultural and organizational rigidity. She argued that "when the body becomes rigid it becomes problematic . . . that is also true when the workforce becomes rigid and when our mindset becomes rigid". This rigidity had to be overcome.
- Flexible work arrangements should not be looked upon as a perk, but as a regular and effective work method. People who opted for it did so because they often wanted to be better and work more.
- Finally, Ms. Mehrotra offered a quote from Indra Nooyi, CEO of Pepsi, which highlights the benefits of organizational flexibility and hints at the cost of rigidity: Ms. Nooyi said when asked the key to her success that most of the time she had been lucky enough to be surrounded by people who "allowed me to be who I was", and who therefore allowed her to conserve her energies for constructive purposes

rather than waste them in negativity, combating unnecessary resistance of her natural grain.

Aparna Mehrotra emphasized that the United Nations was built on justice and the staff had to conserve their energies for the Organization. She called on the audience to be advocates for the issue of flexibility and to request it, because the policies were there to be used for mutual benefit of the Organization and the staff.

## PANEL HIGHLIGHTS

Flexibility was not only technologically possible and desired by employees; it increased worker productivity and morale. If used correctly, it could save an organization's funds on rental properties and utilities, help an organization to become more sustainable, and increase retention and talent. Although flexible work arrangements had historically been thought of as applying primarily to women (especially those with children), it had become apparent that flexible arrangements were appreciated, necessary and used by both men and women, with and without families, and across all age demographics. In fact, one demographic that called for flexible work arrangements was that of retirement age employees who, due to recent economic factors, would rather phase out of a job gradually. Another demographic calling for flexible work arrangements was middle-aged employees facing elder care issues.

Organizations needed to have a clear-cut written policy in place considering that there were many kinds of flexible work arrangements beyond telecommuting and flexible hours. Those included: compressed work weeks, job sharing, reduced hours, seasonal work, flexible career paths, peak and non-peak work hours and phased retirement. When taking into account a flexible work arrangement, therefore, an employee must assess his/her unique situation and find the best possible combination of those options. Equally important was the employee's presentation of his/her case when asking for a flexible arrangement. Rather than proving that personal situations required flexibility, an employee should make an effort to show how a flexible arrangement would not only assist in maintaining present productivity, but also help improve the productivity of the organization. Conversations that did not concern an employee's personal situation could avoid the stigma that had typically accompanied flexible situations, transforming flexible work options from a perk to an economical business strategy and ultimately bringing benefits both to the employee and the employer. ■

## AROUND THE UN ...

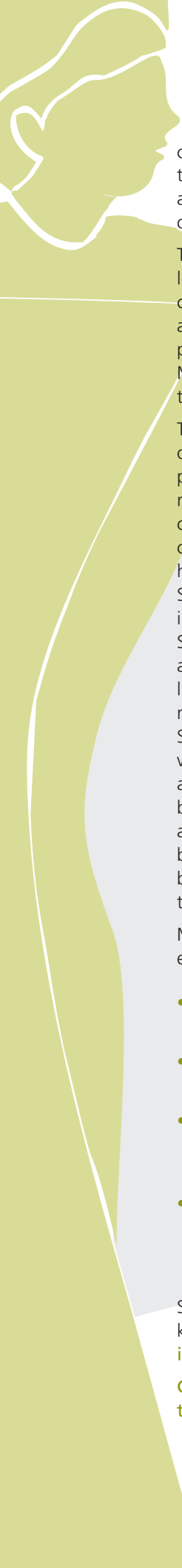
- In a message from Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon read by the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, Rachel Mayanja, during the **Second Ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Advancement of Women held in Guatemala City on 21 January 2009, Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon upheld the importance of more progress in achieving gender equality.** He stressed that empowering women is a means to achieve other major international development targets, noting also that there has been some progress in terms of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on the gender-related issues. Achievement of gender-related goals, however, is a long-term issue as women face major obstacles such as lack of education, high unemployment, violence and lack of access to maternal health care. In his message, the Secretary-General said that prioritizing the needs of women and girls on the development agenda means that progress could also be reached in helping everyone in the society.
- A round table was held by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York, in partnership with the Division for the Advancement of Women on 17 February 2009 in preparation for the 53rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women with the theme "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels". Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, moderated the event. The speakers of the round table discussion included Mr. Moses Rugema, 2nd Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations, Ms. Joann Sandler, Deputy Director of Programs, UNIFEM, Ms. Colette Tamko, Women's Environment Development Organization (WEDO), Project 0/50; and Ms. Sunit Rathore, Tutor/Mentor of the Veerni Project in Jodhpur, India.

Ms. Rachel Mayanja started the round table discussion and stated the timeliness of the theme because, as the world approaches another celebration of International Women's Day from 2-13 March 2009, and despite the progress reached by women in certain areas, women remain unable to making decisions in various aspects of their lives including at the household and community levels. Women's participation in decision-making

areas in the executive and legislative branches has progressed, but, in most countries, women ministers remain a minority in both leadership and traditional roles. As of February 2009, only 26 women head Permanent Missions and Observers to the United Nations in New York. Mayanja emphasized that the fulfillment of the development agenda of the United Nations requires full participation of women in decision-making processes. In the Beijing Platform for Action Declaration, Security Council resolution 1325 on women peace and security, the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals and the World Summit in 2005, the international community stated that women need to play a fundamental role in decision-making for issues of peace, security, development and human rights. In 2006, the Commission on the Status of Women called on the UN system, other international/regional organizations and Member States to take the necessary actions to use strategies to reach gender balance in decision-making processes at all levels.

The first speaker, **Mr. Moses Rugema**, enlightened the audience about the **significant progress and best practices reached in Rwanda in enhancing gender equality after the genocide.** He stated that in order to achieve gender and women's empowerment, approaches such as the establishment of political will and support, application of appropriate mechanisms within government and society and the existence of a strong autonomous women's movement in civil society need to be utilized by the country. In addition, Rwandan legislature established gender equality as its top priority, including setting 30 per cent as a set target of women's representation in the parliament according to Rwanda's 2003 constitution. Currently 56.25 per cent of participants in the parliament are women, including a female as speaker of the parliament. He also stated that women now hold senior government posts; women appointees of the government head the ministries of finance, information, commission of police, revenue collection, foreign affairs, information, infrastructure and foreign affairs. He further stated that female employment rates have increased as a result of women having a central role in economic development.

In the educational sector, Rugema noted that male and female parity at the primary level has been attained since 2000. Rwanda has reached the Millennium Development Goal in this aspect 15 years ahead of schedule. Female literacy has increased since universal access to education exists in the



country. This situation will be further enhanced by the development of mass adult literacy programmes and an increase in trainers when new centres are opened in the future.

The country also has a gender observatory office led by a chief gender monitor. This office evaluates compliance of gender indicators, prepares reports about gender in national development and submits parliamentary annual programme reports. The Minister of Gender continues to establish campaigns to raise awareness about gender issues.

The second speaker, Ms. **Joanne Sandler** focused on some causes and consequences of uneven progress towards equal participation in decision-making and provided examples on how progress can be accelerated. The gender dimensions of the causes and consequences of the current global crisis have, for example, not received sufficient attention. She emphasized that diverse groups perform better in decision-making than homogeneous groups. Ms. Sandler mentioned the serious impact of failing to achieve greater balance in decision-making in issues like HIV/AIDS where only 6 per cent of chairs of national AIDS councils have been held by women. Since the passage of Security Council resolution 1325, very few women participate in peace negotiations and only 1.7 per cent of peace deals are signed by women. As a consequence, women's needs as an effect of war are omitted from the peace-building process and reconstruction plans omit budgetary provisions which would enable women to sustain peace.

Ms. Sandler gave four recommendations to advance equality in decision-making:

- Promote gender responsive approaches to account for women's rights and accountability;
- Introduce leadership which adopts positive action that addresses gender gaps in decision-making;
- Recognize inherent gender discrimination that keeps temporary measures from being effective; and
- Engage strong constituents for both women and men in decision-making who will back agendas for gender equality and social justice and hold them accountable to fulfilling their promises.

Sandler closed her presentation by emphasizing her key point: **equal participation in decision-making is central to all goals of development and peace.**

Colette Tanco continued the discussion and talked about the 50/50 Campaign launched in

2000 by the Women's Environment Development Organization (WEDO) in New York. They invited other organizations to attend to this issue and encouraged governments to get the balance right. Ms. Tanco emphasized the value of women's representation in legislatures and in other instances of governance. The campaign likewise aimed to increase awareness of this issue by garnering a firm conviction from both men and women doing the campaign in regards to the link between a rise of the number of women representation in parliament and an increase in sustainable development. When women are well represented in legislatures, their concerns are better reflected in policy. Consequently, the community benefits. For example, women have made a difference in South Africa due to the 30 per cent increase in their representation in the national assembly. Gender budgeting, therefore, as one example, has been enacted and implemented today when it was not earlier.

Ms. Tanco further noted that WEDO has played a key catalytic role as it researched issues and documented strategies at the national level successful in raising women's representation in parliaments and cabinets and in traditionally male industries such as finance. In this context, Ms. Tanco also mentioned some of the achievements of the Global 50/50 campaign. In Argentina, for instance, the Government adopted a 30 per cent quota in the constitution and national laws. In Namibia, they used the campaign to address issues in public and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and domestic violence.

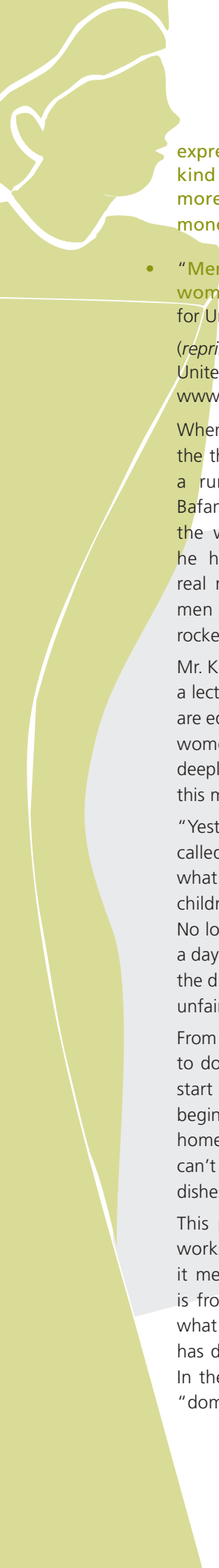
In terms of global trends, Ms. Tanco noted that while the absolute increase of women's representation is small, the rise is significant in parliaments. Participation of women in parliament rose to 18.2 per cent, the highest it has ever been. She said that according to the IPU, 22 countries achieved the 30 per cent target as of November 2008. Nonetheless, this pace is slow and unacceptable. At the current rate of increase, it will take several decades and in some instances several centuries to achieve parity. She emphasized the importance of both qualitative and quantitative representation of women. Although some countries have reached 30 per cent level representation, livelihoods of women have not changed. Finally, **Tanco believes in adopting a more holistic approach to raising awareness of gender issues and other aspects of diversity such as culture and age. Such an integrated approach, she emphasized, will ultimately yield better more sustainable results in terms of numbers as well as the creation of gender-responsive policies.**

The last speaker, Ms. Sunita Rathore, a tutor/mentor of the Veerni Project, talked about her life as a village girl raised by a father who had impeded development opportunities for her. The Veerni Project, founded in 1993, aims to empower women and girls in rural areas in Jodhpur by providing health care and education. Veerni's mission calls for the empowerment of women, girls, families and communities in the desert areas around Jodhpur through the creation of medical, educational, nutrition and community development programmes to bring about change in their communities.

Ms. Rathore mentioned the challenges women in rural villages face such as the suppression of their feelings and lack of freedom of expression. She persisted in being educated despite resistance from her father. Currently a university student of sociology, economics, and political science, Ms. Rathore now feels more empowered, and communicates freely to her parents, an act uncommon to women who live in the villages. She claims that her parents listen to her now. She mentioned some of her other hopes—to join the army, to develop self-discipline, to establish a business and to be a wealthy person so that people will listen to her. She has to overcome what she perceives to be common practices of rural women in her area such as staying at home and doing household chores. She would like to start a school where girls could express their views freely. **She stressed that education has made a difference in her life and similarly it can also for other women.** She noted, "It is difficult but not impossible." ■

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- On International Women's Day, Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon reiterated the importance of ending violence against women and drew attention to a worldwide campaign "United to End Violence Against Women" which he initiated last year. *The campaign will run through 2015, the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.* "Violence against women is thus an attack on all of us, on the foundation of our civilization." He further stated, "All of us—men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders—have a responsibility to help end violence against women. States must honour their commitments to prevent violence, bring perpetrators to justice and provide redress to victims. And each of us must speak out in our families, workplaces and communities, so that acts of violence against women cease."
- Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon launched the **new database on violence** against women on 5 March 2009. The Deputy-Secretary-General Rose Migiro acknowledged it as the **FIRST GLOBAL "ONE-STOP SHOP" FOR INFORMATION ON MEASURES BY MEMBER STATES** to undertake the issue of violence against women in terms of legal, policy and institutional frameworks. The database, which can be used in six official languages of the UN, is a response from Member States to a questionnaire pertaining to violence against women. It contains a list of the 192 Member States of the United Nations with the following information:
  - Services for victims and survivors;
  - Data on capacity-building;
  - Activities for public officials to raise their awareness on the violence done against women;
  - Progress being achieved (good practices);
  - Actions needed to be completed in the future;
  - Key outcomes: national laws; national plans of action; data collection and analysis; national and local campaigns; and sexual violence in conflict situations.
- On International Women's Day, Ambassador Kai Eide of Norway, the UN Special Representative in Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), strongly encouraged the appointment of women in the country's health system, the judiciary and the police force. The entire human power of Afghanistan, a country with rich natural resources, has to be impelled to unite and work together towards economic growth. He noted the recent exposure of the media regarding women being victims of rape and violence. Mr. Eide said that "these cases are unfortunately more widespread than the media can report. The high mortality rate of women and their limited access to the justice, calls for immediate action, an overall campaign to provide for women's rights and thus provide a better future for the entire country of Afghanistan."
- Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), launched the Blue Heart campaign in Vienna on 5 March 2009 with the goal of raising awareness about the millions of women and girls victimized by human trafficking. The blue heart stands for "the sadness of trafficking victims, the cold-heartedness of the perpetrators and the commitment of the United Nations to fight this crime". **The UNODC chief**



expressed that human trafficking “is the worst kind of violence against women, made even more repulsive by the fact that people make money from it”.

- “Men join campaign to end violence against women”, by Stephanie Urdang, Johannesburg, for United Nations, Africa Renewal magazine

(reprinted with permission):

United Nations, Africa Renewal magazine,  
www.un.org/AR

When an older man raised his hand to speak on the third day of a gender workshop in Hoedspruit, a rural community in northern South Africa, Bafana Khumalo’s heart sank. As the facilitator of the workshop, which specifically targeted men, he had already touched on what makes men real men and how the unequal power between men and women was helping to fuel the skyrocketing increase in HIV and AIDS in South Africa.

Mr. Khumalo worried that the participant would give a lecture about how thinking that men and women are equal goes against African culture or how giving women power is dividing families. Older men are deeply respected in rural communities and he knew this man could spoil the workshop.

“Yesterday, after I got home”, the man began, “I called my sons. I called my wife. And I explained what we are doing in this workshop”. He told his children that things had to change in their home. No longer could their mother come back tired from a day of work and be expected to cook, clean, wash the dishes and clear up all on her own. It was simply unfair.

From now on, he told his children, they would have to do some of the household work. “You have to start cleaning and tidying the house. You have to begin preparing dinner so when your mother comes home she can see that we have all contributed. I can’t learn to cook. I am too old. But I will wash the dishes.” For Mr. Khumalo, it was a big moment.

This participant had accepted a key idea of the workshop: that we are not born knowing what it means to be a man. We learn what manliness is from the people around us who have decided what it means. And because it is something society has decided on, it can also be changed by society. In the past, we have said that manhood is about “dominance and aggression, sexual conquest and

fearlessness”, says Mr. Khumalo. These social ideas also say how men and women should behave. If we want to improve our lives today, we have to examine all the different ways in which men and women are unequal.

## MAKING PROGRESS

“I look back at this moment”, he told Africa Renewal, “and I realize we are getting somewhere. This story is repeated again and again whenever we do our programme”. Across South Africa, such workshops are beginning to change attitudes. Research by the South African Men as Partners network shows that 71 per cent of men taking part in such workshops believe that women should have the same rights as men, compared with only 25 per cent more generally. Asked whether they thought it was normal to sometimes beat their wives, 82 per cent of workshop participants said it was not, while 38 per cent of non-participants thought wife-beating was normal.

Mr. Khumalo is co-director of Sonke Gender Justice, a non-governmental organization (NGO) formed in 2006 to try to deal with violence against women and HIV/AIDS. He was struck, he says, by how “hungry” the men in his workshops are to discuss violence against women and their role in that violence. “They express a heartfelt need to be different men and different fathers from the older generation of men”. He strongly believes that gender equality cannot be achieved through women’s empowerment alone and that men’s behaviour and attitudes are driving both the HIV epidemic and violence against women.

Numerous studies find that South Africa has the highest incidence of reported rape of any country in the world. In 2006, the South African Medical Research Council surveyed 1,370 male volunteers from 70 villages and found that close to one man in four had participated in sexual violence. More than 16 per cent had raped a woman who was not his partner or had participated in gang rape, and 8.4 per cent had been sexually violent towards an intimate partner.

When apartheid ended in 1994, achieving equality between women and men was a major goal of the new Government. The protection and promotion of women’s rights and gender equality was enshrined in the 1996 constitution, and a Commission on Gender Equality was established. Six years later, Shelia Meintjes, one of the commission members, said, “We are realizing that if we don’t bring men in as partners, we won’t win the battle”. That view guides activists’ current work with men.



## BUILDING NATIONAL MEN AGAINST VIOLENCE CAMPAIGNS

The first of this work with men was done by women in women's organizations. Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT), for instance, developed a programme to educate men about domestic violence using skits performed in township taverns and in men's marches, one of which was attended by then President Nelson Mandela. Eventually, men began to form groups specifically to address men's roles, their responsibilities, attitudes and behaviour. This "men's movement" has gradually spread.

Now groups like Fathers Speak Out, the Men as Partners network and the South African Men's Forum are involved. Trade union federations, government departments and faith-based groups also have programmes on gender equality and HIV. They hold workshops, stage dramas, promote discussions in taverns, paint murals highlighting the issues and undertake other activities that involve the community.

Sonke Gender Justice is now trying to build a national campaign involving both men and women. Sonke's One Man Can campaign is one example of this broader approach. It is being carried out in nine provinces in South Africa and is gradually being taken up in neighbouring countries. The campaign's messages include suggestions about how to build trust between partners and with women in general and also that men can love passionately, respectfully and sensitively.

"We want men to be able to speak out and take a stand, not to have to watch from the sidelines and do nothing", explains Mr. Khumalo. If a man sees a woman being beaten or hears screams from the other side of a closed door, he needs to act responsibly. "Women are afraid of us. They are afraid to hear footsteps behind them in the night. We have to show them that we care and that we will no longer accept men's bad behaviour towards them". ■

## AROUND THE WORLD ...

- A survey released on 9 March 2009 by the WordPublicOpinion.org, managed by the University of Maryland, indicated that **86 per cent of people worldwide encourage equal rights for women**. This support comes from countries such as India

(60 per cent), Mexico (98 per cent) and the United Kingdom (98 per cent). Furthermore, an average of 81 per cent of the countries surveyed believe that governments need to facilitate the prevention of discrimination against women. The creators of the survey state that in Muslim nations, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Indonesia and Turkey, the majority consider women's rights important. The director of WorldPublicOpinion.org states, "**It is quite extraordinary that there is now such a global consensus across cultures, not only that women should have equal rights but also that it is the responsibility of the government to prevent discrimination**".

- In a small poor riverside village in Olongapo City in the north of Manila, the Philippines, Daisy Balingit and her husband had been struggling to put their three children through school. UNFPA's micro-financial facility has financially assisted the Balingit family. With their help, Daisy Balingit formed an association called the Smoked Fish Vendors' Association. She and other housewives from the village initiated a small business that buys fish to dry and smoke. They are able to create greater profits by not having to buy fish through middlemen. They produce dozens of smoked fish each day. Their project has succeeded financially and brought them more funds which association members use for health care services. Moreover, **husbands have been willing to help their wives in this project**. ■

## WOMEN'S HEALTH

- UNICEF released its report entitled, "**Closing the gap in maternal and neonatal health**", on 15 January 2009. The report indicates the health risks faced by women worldwide, particularly those from the least developed countries, "who are 300 times more likely to die in childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications than women in developed countries". Although some developing countries have improved the survival of children, maternal mortality has not progressed in many countries around the world. UNICEF's Director, Ann M. Veneman, who launched the report in Johannesburg, said that "more than half a million women die every year as a result of pregnancy or childbirth complications, including 70,000 girls and young women aged 15 to 19". She emphasized the need to renew efforts to end this human catastrophe.

To lower the risks for pregnant women and newborns, the report recommends measures such as the provision of essential services and continuous care during adolescence, pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, birth, post-natal, neonatal periods, infancy and childhood; health services at locations which can be accessed

easily by women and children; and education for girls to improve the maternal and neonatal health.

UNFPA's Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid seeks to continue the organization's cooperation with UNICEF and other partners to make progress on maternal and newborn health. ■

## IN YOUR INTEREST

### First quarterly report: Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations

Prepared by: Moon Choi, OFPW Intern

#### Comparison of gender distribution of staff at the DSG/USG level in the United Nations Secretariat as at 1 January 2007 and 26 March 2009

	1 January 2007			26 March 2009			Change in percentage points	Projected year to reach 50/50
	Women	Total	Percentage of women	Women	Total	Percentage of women		
United Nations	5	28	17.9	10 <sup>a</sup>	34	29.4	11.6	2013
SRSGs	1	12	8.3	1 <sup>b</sup>	14	7.1	-1.2	Decreasing
Special Envoys of the SG (WAE)	0	10	0.0	0	8	0.0	0.0	No women
<b>USG Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>2018</b>

The following departments have female USGs as at 26 March 2009:

<sup>a</sup> EOSG (DSG), OIOS, ECLAC, CAAC, ESCAP, DM, DFS, OLA, OHCHR and UN-Habitat.

<sup>b</sup> DPKO/Mission (UNMIL).

#### Comparison of gender distribution of staff at the ASG level in the United Nations Secretariat as at 1 January 2007 and 26 March 2009

	1 January 2007			26 March 2009			Change in percentage points	Projected year to reach 50/50
	Women	Total	Percentage of women	Women	Total	Percentage of women		
United Nations	10	42	23.8	10 <sup>c</sup>	42	23.8	0.0	Stagnant
SRSGs*	0	7	0.0	0	7	0.0	0.0	No women
DSRSGs*	1	15	6.7	5 <sup>d</sup>	15	33.3	26.7	2010
Special Envoys of the SG (WAE)	0	3	0.0	0	3	0.0	0.0	No women
<b>ASG Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>2019</b>

The following departments have female ASGs as at 26 March 2009:

<sup>c</sup> DM, EOSG, OCHA (2), OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNOG, and DESA.

<sup>d</sup> DPKO/Missions - MINURCAT, MONUC, UNMIL, UNSCOL and UNMIS.

\* D-2 SRSGs and DSRSGs:

- 1 Female SRS (UNMIN)

- 4 Male DSRSGs RC/HC/UNAMI, (PoI) UNAMI, MINUSTAH and UNAMA - on SPA to ASG level;

- 1 Male RSG (UNOGBIS), 2 DSRSG (UNPOS and UNOMIG) and 1 Female DERSG (BINUB) – source DPKO.

Gender Distribution of USG and ASG level staff in the programmes, funds and other entities as at 26 March 2009						
	USG			ASG		
	Female	Male	Percentage of women—USG	Female	Male	Percentage of Women—ASG
Includes: UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNITAR, UNOPS, UNRWA, UNU, WFP including WAE appointments	5	5	50	11	11	50

Source: OHRM and DPKO.

## Summary of discussion on strengthening the rights of older people

*Moon Choi, OFPW Intern*

On 9 February 2009, a side event on strengthening the rights of older people was held at the 47th Session of the Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) Commission for Social Development. This event is the outcome of the International Federation on Ageing Conference in Montreal last fall, wherein a number of NGOs and others working on ageing discussed issues surrounding cooperation for the rights of older people.

This side event aimed to explore the process towards developing new rights instruments for elder people. Six speakers were invited from civil society, academia, the UN, government and the legal profession: (1) Irene Hoskins, International Federation on Ageing; (2) Jonathan Kaufman, Disability Works; (3) Robert Butler, ILC-USA; (4) Sergei Zelenev, UNDESA; (5) Cesar Bonamigo, Brazilian Mission to the UN and (6) Ron Risdon, Schulte Roth & Zabel.

The promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons is a principal goal of many NGOs and governments dealing with ageing issues. Although a number of soft law instruments exist regarding the rights of older people, an international, legally binding convention would create a necessary global level of accountability. Initiatives taken at the United Nations level can create a push for action at the national level, where governments are responsible for translating United Nations recommendations and international legal provisions into national policies and action.

Due to political resistance to the idea of new instruments for protecting the rights of older people, to date, no United Nations resolution has been adopted specifically on a new special rapporteur or convention. Some countries put their priority on providing services to younger populations, a larger portion of their population. Many citizens and governments in various countries also lack awareness about elderly abuse and other rights violations against older persons.

For a new convention or special rapporteur on the rights of older people, we need more evidence such as legal, societal, political and impact cases related to ageing. Furthermore, to take this agenda forward, NGOs have an important role to play in (1) sharpening arguments to counter the view that older people are a burden, (2) gathering evidence on specific unprotected vulnerabilities of older people under existing international law, (3) **bringing others working on youth, disabled people and the women's movements into the debate to ensure a truly intergenerational approach**, and (4) adopting new technologies to create political action groups beyond geographic boundaries.

- On 30 January 2009, President Barrack Obama signed his first bill into law, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which was named after Ms. Lily Ledbetter from Alabama who, after spending 19 years in a tire factory, discovered that her male colleagues were receiving higher salaries than her. The Supreme Court then denied the case as she should have filed the law suit 180 days of the date that the company first paid her less than her male colleagues. **The President signed the bill in respect of equality in the United States.** Also, by approving the bill, he honours his late grandmother who worked in a bank during her life and who strived in her banking career and moved up in the ranks, and to his two daughters whom he would like to grow up in a country which considers their contributions without any limits to their aspirations. ■

## WORK/LIFE

In the article "The popularity of flexitime working in Ireland", the author, Meenka Pandita, wrote about the increasing and fast paced popularity of flexitime working in Ireland. White collar employees widely use flexitime. Moreover, women with children have found this practice highly beneficial. Pandita mentioned that flexitime proves to be beneficial not only to the employees but to

the managers as well. **Performance of employees has highly improved** after adapting the flexitime working style. **The stress level of employees has decreased** as they choose the best time for them to work. Increased productivity has become a result of this work arrangement. On the other hand, the author mentioned that the flexitime arrangement may not be advantageous to staff working as a team, unless each team member works during the same time. Furthermore, some companies which adapt this style may incur additional overhead expenses due to the possibility of extended working office hours. Despite these additional costs, **organizations utilizing flexible working systems in Ireland have improved their productivity and have increased their competition in the market.** ■

## RECOMMENDED READING

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/The\\_State\\_of\\_the\\_Worlds\\_Children\\_2009.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/The_State_of_the_Worlds_Children_2009.pdf)

The 2009 flagship publication of UNICEF, the *State of the World's Children 2009*, explores the challenging issues in maternal and newborn health. The report explains the importance of intervening and supporting women as well as children and recommends policies, programmes and partnerships to improve maternal and neonatal health and care.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/53sess.htm>

The fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 2 to 13 March 2009. This site contains the calendar of events during International Women's Day in 2009 in New York, UN observances worldwide, the calendar of parallel events organized by Permanent Missions and UN agencies, and parallel events organized by non-governmental organizations. Also included are the themes, official documentation, agreed conclusions and press releases.

***Work+Life: Finding the Fit that's Right For You* by Cali Williams Yost**

CEO and Founder of Work+Life Fit, Inc., author Cali Williams Yost offers practical instructions and steps for

achieving work/life balance in her book *Work+Life*. She suggests a life outside work which calls for creativity and establishing personal boundaries—what she notes as work+life fit. Yost mentions that managers can be convinced through negotiation and win-win solutions that flexibility in working hours and location is for the best of the organization.

***Intended Consequences  
Rwandan Children Born of Rape***

by Jonathan Torgovnik

Fifteen years after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, surviving mothers of thousands of children born of rapes are still confronted with tremendous challenges and suffer disgrace from the communities. Photographer Jonathan Torgovnik visited Rwanda and, through pictures and interviews, chronicled the personal accounts of the experiences and feelings of these women. Torgovnik is co-founder of Foundation Rwanda, a non-profit organization that supports secondary school education for children born of rape in Rwanda. ■

## RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

<http://www.coe.int>

The Council of Europe focuses on gender equality in this website. The site contains the different undertakings of the Council, and provides access to the publications and studies regarding various problems concerning the gender issue.

<http://www.jhuccp.org>

Johns Hopkins University Center for Communications Programs website includes information and publications about gender and women's health.

[www.aworc.org/org/front.html](http://www.aworc.org/org/front.html)

Asian Women Resource Exchange

The Asian Women's Resource Exchange or AWORC is an internet-based women's information service and network in Asia. Through its website, it joins Asian NGOs that are working for women's rights. It also provides a multilingual search for documents relating to women. ■

## INFO

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/osagi/Network>

To receive hard copies of Network, please send an e-mail request to [network-newsletter@un.org](mailto:network-newsletter@un.org)

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**Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat**

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

Tel.: 1 212 963 6828; fax: 1 212 963 9545

E-mail: [network-newsletter@un.org](mailto:network-newsletter@un.org)