



From the desk of the Focal Point

Dear Colleagues,

This issue of **network** is dedicated to International Women's Day. It covers Headquarters and United Nations field events held to commemorate the spirit of women everywhere, to honour their celebrations and to highlight their concerns. The theme of women of Afghanistan continued to loom large on International Women's Day itself as well as in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) sessions.

Of particular note during international women's week was a panel discussion organized by the Group on Equal Rights for Women on the working environment for women. Staff members heard presentations from several speakers. A summary of these is provided and they can be found on the web site www.un.org/womenwatch/news. Ms. Angela E. V. King spoke on behalf of the Secretary-General, who reiterated his commitment, especially in the framework of the upcoming UN reforms. In this context, I would only add that for us to be effective as an Organization, the Secretary-General's expressed commitment has to be matched by our own—revitalization and improvement cannot happen any other way.

Therefore, perhaps we could use the opportunity to strengthen our resolve in three dimensions:

- Conviction—be the change that we want to see. Respect, communication, cordiality, consideration and consultation are cited repeatedly by staff as elements of an improved working environment.
- Collaboration—join forces. An individual by himself or herself, like a single strand of a rope, cannot be in strength what several strands joined together in an organized fashion can be. There is no substitute for organized solidarity.
- Commitment—let commitment express itself where conviction resides. Commit to specific tasks required to realize the practices you wish to see promulgated.

In solidarity,

Aparna Mehrotra

around the un . . .

International Women's Day, 8 March 2002

International Women's Day was celebrated this year at the United Nations Secretariat focusing on "Afghan Women Today: Realities and Opportunities". The event included a video presentation on Afghan women, and a panel discussion with participants including, among others, the United Nations Secretary-General and the First Lady of the United States. The event constituted the first ever televised International Women's Day. It was organized by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women together with the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with a Task Force of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality including, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The Secretary-General opened the meeting stating that "the commitment to Afghan women should redouble the determination to address the challenges millions of women and girls faced worldwide" and that "the Day celebrating Afghan women belonged to all women the world over". Violence against women, for example, was a worldwide epidemic, he said. He further emphasized the need for all members of society to work for gender equality and that "all must remember that the achievement of women's rights, along with their advancement, benefited all". Mr. Han Seung-Soo, the President of the General Assembly, said that "today's celebration of Afghan women should renew the determination to advance the goals of equality for women everywhere. That was in the best interest of all humanity." Mr. Ole Peter Kolby, President of the Security Council, speaking on its behalf, reminded all that the Security Council had expressed its broad support for the women of Afghanistan and that the Council recognized that more women needed to be involved in peace-related activities. Laura Bush, the First Lady of the United States, noted that the terrorist attacks of 11 September had brought the role of Afghan women to the attention of the world and that the world was now helping Afghan women return to the lives they had once known.

Angela E. V. King, the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, then read out a statement from the Minister for Women's Affairs of Afghanistan, Ms. Sima Samar, who is also one of the five Vice-Presidents in the Interim Administration. In it, she said

that she hoped that the international community would not forget Afghanistan again. Rather, she hoped that it would renew its new promises and provide substantial relief and development assistance to help rebuild the economy and allow Afghan women and girls to rebuild their lives.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued a statement of solidarity with Afghan women during its session. Charlotte Abaka (Ghana), Chairperson of the Committee, read the statement.

Also noted was a joint declaration issued on 7 March 2002 by three rapporteurs on women's rights: the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women; the Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.



Ms. Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States, together with Ms. Nane Annan and Ms. Angela E. V. King, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, greet women staff members during the celebrations of International Women's Day.
Photo: UN/DPI

A panel discussion was moderated by Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Interim Head, Department of Public Information. The panellists included Ms. Sima Wali, President, Refugee Women in Development; Queen Noor of Jordan; Mr. Othman Jerandi (Tunisia); Chairperson, Commission on the Status of Women; Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and Ms. Julia Taft, Assistant Administrator and Director, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP). This was on behalf of the United Nations Development Group and was followed by questions and answers from participants and non-governmental organizations.

It was stated that the United Nations is proud that it has been observing 8 March as International Women's Day since 1974, International Women's Year. The Day is marked by events held worldwide, at UN Headquarters, in peacekeeping missions and in other agencies of the UN system, by women's groups everywhere, at national and local levels.

International Women's Day in the field—some highlights

For the third year in a row, International Women's Day was celebrated in Kabul. The new Minister for Women's Affairs of Afghanistan organized a public celebration in which the Interim Afghan leader, Hamid Karzai, Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson and UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer participated. Prior to this, an Afghan Women's Consultation was held from 5 to 7 March in Kabul, organized by the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, UNIFEM and UN agencies. Some 50-60 women from all over the country discussed issues of security, women's rights, education, health, political participation, the need for representation, protection, governance, capacity-building, economic security and employment. Minister Samar said, among other things, that she is working with the Interim Authority to make sure that women are issued national identification cards to ensure their right to engage in the political process as voters and representatives.

The United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) in Sarajevo organized, among other activities, a well-attended public panel discussion on the topic "Women and Law Enforcement in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Participants/panellists included a prominent local female TV news anchor, NGOs, the Sarajevo Police Academy, the International Police Task Force, local police and UNMIBH Civil Affairs. At the regional level in Brcko, UNMIBH launched a public "Stop trafficking of women" campaign.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) held its own celebration under the theme "Women's voices on the empowerment of women". Many other events were held by women's groups and Governments around the world.

GERWUN panel, "Improving the working environment for women", 5 March 2002

The Group on Equal Rights for Women (GERWUN) organized an International Women's Day discussion on best practices for the working environment. The panellists included: Ms. Angela E. V. King, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General; Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); H.E. Ambassador Gert Rosenthal of Guatemala, former Chair of the Fifth Committee; Ms. Julie Oyegun, Director of Diversity of the World Bank; Ms. Sharman Stein, Editor of *Working Mother* magazine; and Ms. Cheryl Larsen, President of GERWUN. Ms. Aparna Mehrotra, the Focal Point for Women, acted as moderator.

Ms. King gave a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General. She called for all women to be more proactive in pursuing their careers and noted that women still don't apply for posts in sufficient numbers. She encouraged them to do so. Ambassador Rosenthal of Guatemala, speaking about the working women in Latin America, said that the most immediate concern is to promote overall economic growth and development in a broader context in order to generate jobs. This would help vulnerable groups and assist in redressing the inequitable patterns of income distribution which affect women particularly. He also emphasized the need to have public policies that focus specifically on improved working conditions.

When speaking about the new UNFPA work/life programme, Ms. Obaid said that without a clear policy document, few women are likely to negotiate flexible working arrangements for themselves. She said that work/life policies promote the morale, the quality and the productivity of work. Clearly this positively affects the overall functioning of the organization. Other best practices included: a human resources strategy that covers gaps and the concerns of women employees; gender-sensitivity training; a zero-tolerance policy for all types of discrimination and harassment, especially sexual; and a good, improved working environment that recognizes the multiple roles of women and the skills that emanate from such multitasking, as well as their concomitant demands.

Ms. Stein told the audience that every year more and more companies apply for *Working Mother* magazine's best practices survey, aspiring to make it to the list of the best 100 employers. If they do not succeed, they also want to know the reasons for failing to do so. Among several constraints, she particularly pointed to two widely prevalent problems: disparate benefits—support staff are not entitled to the same benefits as executive staff; and disparate pay scales—pay for women's work still lags behind.

Ms. Oyegun, from the World Bank, said that all work/life issues and choices bear a price tag. Who can support this work and how, she asked. This, she noted, was relevant particularly in organizations with a great deal of field presence. The nature of work is changing and organizations need to reconsider their priorities. For example, is presence in the office more important than productivity? She also emphasized learning and mentoring programmes.

Ms. Cheryl Larsen carried out a random staff survey prior to International Women's Day on the topic of the working environment in the United Nations. She received 100 answers from Headquarters and 75 from other duty stations. A quarter of the replies came from men, and three quarters from women, 40 per cent from General Service staff and 60 per cent from Professional staff. Ms. Larsen raised three main concerns: 1) the need for a better work/life environment; 2) career opportunities for General Service staff mem-

bers; and 3) staff members' need for recognition (PAS). She said that according to the survey, staff need institutional support to use work/life programmes, and that there is a need for more affordable day care for children and equal benefits for General Service staff. On the issue of career advancement, General Service staff spend on average 7 years in grade, male Professionals 3.5 years and women Professionals 5.5 years. When looking for qualified women candidates for posts, Ms. Larsen encouraged managers to search among the highly qualified women General Service staff already working in the Organization. The survey also showed that 70 per cent of the interviewees felt demoralized and in need of appropriate recognition in their Performance Appraisal (PAS).

For more information on the survey, please contact Ms. Larsen at larsenc@un.org. To read the statements of the panel, please visit www.un.org/womenwatch/news.

Commission on the Status of Women, 4-14 March 2002

The Commission reviewed several reports this year. One of them was the Secretary-General's report on discrimination against women and girls in Afghanistan (E/CN.6/2002/5). The report covers the socio-economic and human rights of women and girls, including health, education, employment, freedom of movement and association and human rights violations. It also contains a comprehensive account of UN agencies' international and national efforts after September 2001 regarding relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation, and activities by Afghan women. Most important, the report makes various recommendations and calls on the international community to "ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed in all its interventions while, at the same time, seeking to proceed in a sensitive way that gives women ownership of the process".

During the two-week session, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted draft agreed conclusions on two thematic issues: "Eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world" and "Environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective". The Economic and Social Council has been asked to endorse the agreed conclusions. The Commission also adopted several resolutions:

- Release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts;
- The situation of and assistance to Palestinian women;
- Women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS;
- The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan;
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

For the first time in its 55-year history, the Commission was chaired by a man, Mr. Othman Jerandi (Tunisia).

For information please see www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw.

Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), 26 February–1 March 2002

Under the aegis of the newly reformed UN System Chief Executives Board of Coordination (formerly the Administrative Committee on Coordination), the renamed Network on Women and Gender Equality held its annual meeting, chaired by Ms. Angela E. V. King. The Network reported on the ongoing work and completed projects in the following areas:

- Women, peace and security, including inter-agency activities in Afghanistan (OSAGI reporting);
- Gender and information and communications technologies (ITU reporting);
- Tools and indicators for gender impact analysis, monitoring and evaluation (ECLAC reporting);
- Gender mainstreaming in programme budgets (OSAGI reporting);
- Gender and financing for development (OSAGI reporting);
- Mainstreaming of a gender perspective in common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNIFEM reporting);
- Database activities, including compilation of best practices, gender training materials and Women Watch (DAW reporting).

The Network organized a workshop on training and capacity-building for gender mainstreaming chaired by Ms. Sissel Ekaas of FAO. Members of the Network discussed two future challenges in particular: institutionalizing gender perspectives in the work of their respective organizations, and linking the gender dimension with all the critical areas of concern covered by the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration.

Copies of the report (IANWGE/2002/11) are available from Michio Sarumida, sarumida@un.org. Please see www.un.org/womenwatch/IAMWGE.

network can be read online at
www.un.org/womenwatch/network.

CEDAW session, 14 January–1 February 2002

On the occasion of its twenty-sixth session, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) expressed its solidarity with, and support for, the women of Afghanistan. The statement that was adopted on 1 February 2002 emphasized the importance of and need for equal participation of men and women as equal partners during the reconstruction and development process of the country. The 23-member Committee recognized that over a very prolonged period of time Afghan women had been suffering every privation known to humankind; they had lost all their fundamental human rights, particularly the right to life, education, health and work.

The Committee also recalled that Afghanistan had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1980. It expressed its hope that the human rights of women as provided for therein would henceforth guide all actions in both the public and private spheres.

During the last session, the Committee Chairperson, Ms. Charlotte Abaka of Ghana, said that one of the major milestones with regard to the implementation of the Convention was the adoption of the Optional Protocol. This Protocol provides an avenue for addressing individual complaints once all national remedies are exhausted. Another welcome event included the ratification of the Convention by Saudi Arabia. As part of its regular work, the Committee reviewed the reports of Estonia, Fiji, Iceland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay. The Committee also adopted statements to be forwarded to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, 8-12 April) and to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2-11 September).

A special welcome to the UN family to ...

H.E. Ms. Margaret Hughes-Ferrari, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as of 21 September 2001.

H.E. Ms. Irma Loembam Tobing-Klein, Permanent Representative of Suriname, as of 5 February 2002.

Ms. Brigita Schmögnerová of the Slovak Republic, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva as of 1 March 2002 at the level of USG. Ms. Schmögnerová is a former Minister of Finance, Deputy Prime Minister and Economic Adviser to the President of the Slovak Republic. From 1995 to 1998 she served as Member of Parliament. She was awarded the World Finance Minister of the Year Award in 2000. In her capacity as a Governor of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and alternate Governor of the International Monetary Fund, she worked closely with the International

Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. She has a Ph.D. in economics and is married with one son.

Congratulations to ...

Ms. Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, appointed as the new UN Ombudsperson at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. Ambassador Durrant will assume her functions as of 1 July 2002.

Ambassador Durrant has been the Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations since 1995. She has served over three decades in the diplomatic service and as Director-General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.



Ms. Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, the new UN Ombudsperson, addressing the UN.
Photo: UN/DPI

Ms. Lena Sundh of Sweden, appointed as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. Ms. Sundh, who assumed her functions on 22 April 2002, is former Director of the Africa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Swedish Ambassador to Angola and Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. James Morris of the United States, appointed Executive Director of the World Food Programme in Rome.

Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze of Russia, appointed Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva as of 1 March 2002.

Farewell to ...

Ms. Catherine Bertini, whose second term as the Executive Director of the World Food Programme ended in March 2002.

Ms. Danuta Hübner, who stepped down as Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva to join her Government in Poland in October 2001.

Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Executive Secretary of the UN Office in Geneva, who retired after ten years with the United Nations.

in the news

Guidelines for the protection of civilians in armed conflict

The Security Council adopted guidelines, an aide-memoire, identifying 13 core objectives for protecting civilians in armed conflicts, on 15 March 2002. These objectives are: access to vulnerable populations; separation of civilians and armed elements; justice and reconciliation; security, law and order; disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation; small arms and mine action; training of security and peacekeeping forces; effects on women; effects on children; safety and security of humanitarian and associated personnel; media and information; natural resources and armed conflict; and the humanitarian impact of sanctions.

Mr. Kenzo Oshima, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said that the guidelines could “serve as a quick and easy reference guide for Council members when developing a peacekeeping mandate”.

The guidelines stipulate addressing “the needs of women for assistance and protection” as one of the primary objectives for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In this context, it highlights the centrality of the following elements as “issues of consideration”:

- Special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based discrimination, violence, rape and other forms of sexual abuse (access to legal redress, crisis centres, shelters, counselling and other assistance programmes; monitoring and reporting mechanisms);
- Effective measures to disarm, demobilize, reintegrate and rehabilitate women and girl soldiers;
- Mainstreaming of gender perspective, including by integration of gender advisers in peace operations;
- Expansion of the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations (among military observers, civilian police, humanitarian and human rights personnel);
- Increased participation of women at all decision-making levels (organization and management of refugee and IDP camps; design and distribution of assistance; rehabilitation policies).

Under the objective “Training of security and peacekeeping forces”, the guidelines call for appropriate training in humanitarian and human rights law, civil-military coordination, negotiation and communication skills, gender and culture sensitization, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases.

Latest report on the improvement of the status of women

The Commission on the Status of Women reviewed the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (E/CN.6/2002/7) during its session in March 2002.

Here are some of the highlights of the report:

- It was estimated that the General Assembly-mandated goal of 50/50 gender distribution in the Secretariat would be reached before the year 2012 (assuming an annual increase of 1 per cent). However, in view of the 2.2-percentage-point decline over the past two years in appointments of one year or more (from December 1999 to November 2001), this projection is no longer valid.
- The percentage of women on appointments of one year or more remained unchanged at 34.6 per cent (30 November 2001). However, the overall percentage of women declined from 35.5 per cent in December 2000 to 34.6 per cent in June 2001, constituting a second year in a row of decreasing gender representation.
- This decline is due mainly to the significant increase in the number of men assigned to peacekeeping missions. Out of the 1,032 additional personnel, 76.6 per cent were men and 23.4 per cent were women (30 November 2001).
- The progress in the gender distribution at the D-1 level in the recent years has slowed. Since December 2000, the percentage of women at the D-1 level and above has remained minimal, rising from 24.6 per cent to 24.7 per cent only.

Women and peacekeeping—a follow-up

Interview with a mission focal point, Ms. Juliet P. Capati, UNIFIL Focal Point for Women

network asked our new mission focal point in UNIFIL to answer some questions regarding the working environment and career concerns. As in our earlier conversations with other headquarters and mission departmental focal points, some common points emerged. It was repeatedly stated, for example, that constant manoeuvring of work and family responsibilities constitutes undue, unfair and rather alarming levels of stress for women. Furthermore, spouse employment and/or child/elderly care situations affect mobility and continue to place double or triple burdens on working women. In addition, women voice concerns about the prevalence of behaviours in the workplace that do not meet proper standards of integrity, equality and humanity. With respect to

career advancement, it was felt that mentors are fundamental to helping younger women colleagues, the future women leaders, navigate the complexities of the United Nations system and successfully overcome the obstacles and struggles that women seem to continuously face in greater proportion than their male counterparts in their work.

Q: What are the particular issues confronting women nowadays in the workplace?

- 1) Job discrimination: Some managers feel that because we are women, we cannot do jobs as well as men. Maybe this could possibly be true when it comes to physically exhausting or manual jobs that require a lot of muscle. However, in terms of intellectual or psychological capabilities, women should be given a chance to be recognized and not be stereotyped as the weaker sex.
- 2) Sexual harassment: Some men, especially seasoned field service staff and military men, seem to have the notion that women are at their mercy, as oftentimes indicated by expressions (whether verbal or non-verbal) offensive to women. Some of them don't view women as equals and treat them as being inferior.
- 3) Balance of work and family demands: Career women, especially at present, have a significant role as breadwinners and mothers. The economic situation forces more women to work. They have to juggle the roles of work and family matters to maintain, inter alia, the lifestyle their children are accustomed to, as well as and more importantly, to provide the best education possible for them. This constant manoeuvring of work and family life has put a lot of pressure on women.

Q: What issues do you believe constitute the next frontier of issues of concern to women?

- 1) Flexitime arrangements: Women and men with children (or elder care) may be allowed more flexible working hours or teleworking possibilities.
- 2) Career advancement through proper training and education: We observed that only very few women, especially those already in the managerial positions, are given opportunities to advance, and staff members in the General Service category are just being overtaken by those already at the top. This kind of policy should be carefully looked into.
- 3) The policy of spouse employment: The UN environment, although reflecting a notion of stability in terms of job security, regrettably makes it very hard to keep the family intact. Career women, especially in the Professional category, are finding it difficult to cope with the demands for relocation while their families have to stay in the countries where they have already established a home, or where their husbands have already built a career. While this may currently be more of an issue affecting women, I see it increasingly becoming an organizational issue affecting men as well. Men are now

increasingly faced with the same dilemmas due to their professional working partners.

Q: What could constitute pointers for breaking the glass ceiling?

- 1) We should not be passive recipients of discrimination, in one way or the other, by blindly accepting what is considered to be the “norm” and “ordinary”. Rather, we should be inquisitive and always reflect if it is in accordance with the spirit as well as letter of existing UN rules and regulations. We should always be abreast of the changes taking place and have a querying mind if we feel something does not seem right according to the rules of law and proper decorum.
- 2) The communication between the supervisors and their staff should be open. There should be no hindrance, whatsoever, in expressing one’s concerns on issues which affect the productivity of staff as a whole and being able to voice them.
- 3) The ability to prove and demonstrate our capacities. We could, for example, do more than what we are assigned and constantly update our knowledge of the work we do through participation in in-house training. This could signal to management that we are interested in career advancement and are ready and equipped for it.
- 4) There should always be transparency in terms of training, whether in-house or not, to make sure that everyone is afforded equal treatment. By doing so, we will be able to achieve the Secretary-General’s vision of UN competencies for the future.

Q: Does having women in leadership positions make a difference in an organization and, if so, how?

Definitely. Women in leadership positions always make a difference. Women have a reputation for being patient and more detailed in the performance of their work. Thus women, if given leadership roles, may be in a better position to find, assess and deal with any flaws of the organization. Also, mentoring and training always have a role in advancing women’s careers. Having an adviser or someone who can be trusted in terms of career advancement should be encouraged.

Q: Given the human resources reform this year, in your opinion, what are the issues and concerns that need to be addressed immediately and in the long term?

Of immediate concern is the policy on recruitment and promotion, especially when it concerns the number of qualified women who apply for positions as opposed to the number of men. There should be a well-balanced proportion of points given to each qualifying factor, including legitimate work/life concerns, so this will assist to end gender disparity, I am sure.

In the long term, the 50/50 per cent gender distribution of staff in the Professional category, in terms of nationality and qualifications in accordance with the existing vacancies, must be carefully monitored to be able to achieve the target.

Issues such as spouse employment are another big concern, particularly with field service personnel. All measures adopted catering to the Organization’s needs should also be matched by measures including staff members’ family needs.

Q: What specific problems do women staff, local and international, have in UNIFIL?

I would assume the specific problems that our women staff face in UNIFIL are more or less the same as those elsewhere in the UN system. Several women feel that they are not afforded the necessary training to develop their skills, e.g., computer training, negotiating skills, stress management and quality training. If a few are given such opportunities, then mechanisms are needed so that the knowledge should be better shared among others. This must, however, only complement opportunities for educational advancement which are non-existent due to the restricted policies on tuition reimbursements for field personnel.

Another issue is the selection of staff for particular posts where certain flaws seem to be manifesting. In UNIFIL, in particular, health hazards like inappropriate sanitation facilities are also a main concern. For a majority of local staff, availability of UNIFIL-provided transport has become another concern. Recreational activities, such as organized trips, are not available for either local or international women staff, especially for the newcomers.

Q: Finally, how would you summarize your experience as a Focal Point for Women in UNIFIL? What do you feel could make you more effective?

Having just assumed this post last year in the summer of 2001, I have already conducted two meetings to discuss the concerns of women staff in UNIFIL, which I also brought to the attention of the administration. I must say that adhering to the concept of making “women’s voices heard” in my mission gives me a sense of responsibility. Even if I am encountering some difficulties or barriers during the process, it is still worth the effort, because, somehow, someday, somewhere, we will eventually be recognized.

In order to be more effective, I want to develop the following aspects:

- 1) Enhanced communication skills with the staff and management of our mission;
- 2) Updated knowledge on the latest developments and official documents, (through liaising with the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat) on the measures being adopted to obtain gender equality in the UN system and in the human resources reform currently being worked on;
- 3) An “open-door” policy to be able to encourage women to express their concerns regarding their particular work or role in the mission;
- 4) Accessibility to reliable information for dissemination to women staff on health consciousness, basic human rights and

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

5) Provision of the necessary training, such as gender mainstreaming, conflict resolution and gender issues related to women in peacekeeping, by liaising with the Training and Evaluation Service in DPKO.

Finally, accepting this responsibility is a challenge for enhancing my capabilities. I live with the principle that Winston Churchill advocated: “The price of greatness is responsibility.”

Statistics

network selected some of the largest UN peace support operations and looked at the gender distribution of Professional and higher-level women staff on peacekeeping missions, as of 30 November 2001. The grand total of all Professional staff and above on peace support operations in the field was 1,894 (1,419 men and 475 women), bringing the percentage of Professional women up to 25.1 per cent.

Mission	Men	Women	Women as % of total
UNMIBH	80	39	32.8
MINUGUA	31	14	31.1
UNTAET	305	118	27.9
UNMIK	473	163	25.6
UNOCHI	97	30	23.6
MONUC	108	32	22.9
UNOMSIL	73	21	22.3
MINURSO	45	9	16.4
UNMEE	63	14	15.1

Source: Human Resources Planning and Management Information System Service.

Mission abbreviations:

UNMIBH:	United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina
MINUGUA:	United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala
UNTAET:	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UNMIK:	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNOHCI:	United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq
MONUC:	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
UNAMSIL:	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
MINURSO:	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
UNMEE:	United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea

on the spot

Interview with a Departmental Focal Point for Women, Ms. Kanchan Paser from the Department of Political Affairs (DPA)

Q: In your view and experience as Departmental Focal Point, what are the particular issues that women in the United Nations are facing today and would like to see addressed?

A: Women in the UN probably have the same concerns as women elsewhere in the workplace. They want to be treated with respect regardless of their position. This is a serious concern, especially for women in the General Service category. Women want their views and perspectives to be given the same professional consideration as those of their male colleagues. For the most part, women in the UN do not believe that they receive fair and equal treatment with regard to recruitment and promotion. There is the perception that male managers tend to give more support to promoting their male colleagues over equally or even more qualified female staff. Even if this practice is restricted to one or two managers, because higher-level posts are so scarce, its impact can be very damaging to the career development of female staff.

Women also see the “old-boy” network as being very much in force, and resulting, oftentimes, in their being excluded from the “inner circle” of information sharing. This, of course, places them at a distinct disadvantage in terms of their not being fully informed on all issues relevant to the job. This is true in general, but certainly particularly true for those dealing in any way with gender.

Another area of concern is reconciling family responsibilities with those of the office. The UN work culture encourages long working hours. While this is a problem which affects male and female staff, it places more of a strain on women, who usually have primary responsibility for the family. A situation that is perhaps unique to the UN is the long-term separation (of more than two years) of families because of mission assignment of one spouse. This is an area which I think needs to be more aggressively addressed.

Q: What issues do you believe constitute the next frontier of issues of concern to women?

A: I think that until the present concerns are fully addressed and remedied, it would simply be an academic exercise to project “the next frontier of issues”.

Q: How can women break the glass ceiling?

A: Not ever having broken any glass ceiling myself, I speak solely from observation. I think women have to “prove” themselves much more than men do and, in order for them to go that step further, they need to have a distinct edge over

their male counterparts. Unfortunately, sometimes even meeting these criteria is not enough. It might also be a question of being in the right place at the right time, and it certainly depends on the management culture within that particular organization. Of course, the ideal situation would be a work environment which has no “artificial” glass ceiling, and where one’s ability to reach the top would be based simply on one’s ability in an environment which understands the need for work/life balance for both men and women.

Q: Does having women in leadership positions make a difference in an organization, and, if so, how?

A: It should. However, this is not a given and it depends entirely on the woman. One would hope that women in leadership positions would, by attempting to be more sensitive and committed to gender equality, remove the barriers and obstacles they themselves had to overcome. This would help in establishing a working culture that is more gender-inclusive and generally more open to the sharing of ideas. Women do tend to have a different perspective from men, and I think it is important that it be validated at all levels, but particularly at the more senior management level. Unfortunately, however, it is not unusual to have women who on attaining senior management positions assume the same attitudes which they themselves had to fight so vigorously against. This is unfortunate because it would be better to have them as allies to really begin to change the paradigm to a different and more sensitive as well as more representational one.

Q: Given the human resources reform this year, in your opinion, what are the issues and concerns that need to be addressed?

A: I think that the abolition of departmental panels removes an important checkpoint in the recruitment and promotion process. It is already difficult enough, even with the panels in place, to ensure that the selection process is fair and equitable. Without the panels this will be even more difficult, and I am not sure that the Central Review Bodies would allow for substantive vigilance either. I also don’t believe there is any specific reference to the special measures for women (ST/AI/1999/9) under the new system, which means that there is cause for increased vigilance to ensure that the measures are respected and enforced. It is also not too clear, at this point, just how effective a role departmental focal points will have as a result of the reforms.

Q: From your experience, which measures would best contribute to the achievement of gender balance in the UN system?

A: I think it would require a combination of measures. Stronger networking among women is definitely essential. In addition, effective mentoring for younger female staff combined with the tracking of their career development could cer-

tainly play a role. However, I think most important is the “political will” to recruit and promote women, particularly to senior-level management positions.

Q: Finally, how would you summarize your experience as a Departmental Focal Point for Women in DPA?

A: Thus far, it has been a very positive and rewarding experience and I believe that I have actually been able to make a positive contribution as a focal point. The fact that senior management in the Department have been very supportive has certainly been a contributing factor. I must also say that, for the most part, I have found DPA departmental panels to be quite responsible in terms of attempting to ensure that the recruitment and promotion process is fair and transparent. I have found, however, that women still tend to be hesitant in “speaking out” for fear of “repercussions”. This, of course, limits the effectiveness of the Focal Point in addressing their issues of concern. Overall, however, I would say that my experience as a Focal Point has been a positive one.

article

The End to Violence Begins at Home—the UNTAET Public Information Office launches campaign

By Brennon Jones, Deputy Director, Office of Communication and Public Information, United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET)

East Timor recently held a national election. It was remarkable, not just for its high turnout but because it was completely free of political violence. In its aftermath, the country is now considered something of a global showcase, in large part for holding elections that are completely free of voter intimidation and political violence. Unfortunately, this nation now has the dubious distinction of having one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world. The lingering effects of the social and psychological trauma experienced in 1999, left largely untreated until now, probably are an exacerbating factor, even after two years.

Domestic violence comes to the workplace

With more concerned policing and increased awareness due to UN, NGO and civil society initiatives, the incidents of domestic violence are far better recorded. Those of us at UNTAET’s Office of Communication and Public Information (OCPI)—the journalists who bring you Radio UNTAET, Televizaun Timor Lorosa’e (TVTL) and the newspaper *Tais Timor*—used to look at the issue of domestic violence in largely abstract terms. It was just something that happened to others. But increasingly, we have come to real-

ize that this is not the case at all. The painful, destabilizing effects of it are all too evident in our own workplace, our small community of friends and peers.

It comes in the form of distraught and traumatized employees who arrive to the job late, often too scared and physically or psychologically bruised and exhausted to work. All of us share a bit of their anguish. Many of us take up the slack when our colleagues, the victims of such abuse, are compelled to pursue lengthy police and court proceedings, or simply hide out from the horror of it all.

While not wanting to be publicly identified, a number of OCPI employees stepped forward and talked frankly about their own personal experiences with domestic abuse. They all say with conviction that it is time for East Timor society



Women in conflict areas—East Timor.

Photo: UN/DPI

to put an end to such violence. Collectively, their stories demonstrate the corrosive dynamics of the problem.

One staff member desperately wants to leave her husband but fears that without his financial support, her children's future will be put in jeopardy. "I'm always thinking about my kids", she says. Her greatest fear is that somehow all her relatives will deem her a bad person for wanting to leave her husband and her kids will be taken away from her.

Another OCPI journalist wants to go to the police and have her husband jailed, but fears the physical and psychological wrath of her mother-in-law. Still another was threatened by her father, who himself has a long history of domestic abuse. "My father hit my mother. I saw it many times", she says. "Now he says to me: 'If you get divorced, then you're not my daughter anymore!'" One employee manages to laugh at the absurdity of her situation. "There was my husband", she says. "He was throwing rocks at me. But imagine, he's wearing one of the OCPI-issued T-shirts that says, 'End the violence now!'" More than a few point to jealousy as the source of their spouses' rage. Why? Because they hold jobs; even worse because they work with the international community.

One young journalist says she decided to go to the police about her situation. But she didn't just do it because of the beatings she's been experiencing. "My mother is in her second marriage", she says. "He hits my mom but she won't seek help. I went to the police to show my stepfather that if I can do this, so can my mom". Another OCPI worker is the daughter of a repeat offender, and for months had to provide financial and psychological support for her half-dozen younger siblings while her dad hid out from the police and her mom hid out from her dad.

At OCPI, with our 94 employees, we're drawing the line on such violence. Rather than preaching to others, we have decided to initiate a campaign to educate and train our own employees to confront the problem and to assist and protect any OCPI colleague who is a victim or vulnerable to abuse.

Human rights begin at home

We are thankful that we can take this stand with the East Timor political leadership and civil society supporting the position. We take our cues, in fact, from no less than Chief Minister Mari Alkatiri, himself. Recently he said something remarkable during the 16 days against gender violence campaign, a worldwide educational event that ended 10 December 2001.

What he said was this:

"Domestic violence is on the increase and lots of people consider beating a wife a private matter not to be discussed publicly."

But then the Chief Minister drew his own line, saying the nation "is preoccupied with the reconciliation process which will lead to healing among the East Timorese. This process can only be successful if it begins in the family. We are therefore committed to creating a culture of peace and respect for the human rights of all our people", he declared. "Our women and girls should enjoy their freedom without violence."

The voice of East Timor's long-standing activist-diplomat and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, now Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Jose Ramos-Horta, is added to this campaign. He says:

"The verbal and physical abuse of women and children is a scourge in our society. It has been exacerbated by the culture of oppression, humiliation and violence, a legacy of Indonesian rule. This is yet another wound we have to heal. It breaks my heart when I hear stories of violence against women . . . the East Timorese women are particularly vulnerable. Physically many of them are weak from malnutrition, multiple pregnancy, malaria, TB, etc. They work long hours in the field, fetch firewood and water, cook for the whole family, look after the children."

We recently asked Sergio Vieira de Mello, the UN Transitional Administrator, about his own views on domestic violence in East Timor. He promptly laid down a challenge:

“You, the Timorese people, have shown such magnificent patience and restraint during the past two years. Again and again, by renouncing all forms of political and civil violence, you have proved the naysayers wrong. Regrettably, only in the home does a significant degree of violence linger on. It must stop! I urge you, as a society and individuals, during the coming months to commit yourselves to rid your homes and your communities of all forms of domestic abuse”.

One thing to remember: East Timor’s violence-free elections didn’t come about by magic. There was a professional force of UN police and peacekeepers and East Timor police service and defence force in place to reassure the people. There were months of community and NGO initiatives in civic education against violence. There was strong political and church leadership calling for non-violence—the most important initiative being the National Unity Pact, which called on all political parties and the Timorese people to reject violence.

And when we envision a campaign to end domestic violence, we tip our hat to the Civilian Police’s Vulnerable Persons Unit and the East Timor police service, UNTAET’s Gender Unit (now called the Department of Gender Equality), and the many national and local groups that are veterans in the battle against domestic violence and have done so much in responding to and raising awareness about the issue.

This article was originally published in the January-February 2002 issue of *Tais Timor*.

OCPI initiative

So what are the practical steps OCPI is taking? Here are a few, and we’re sure we we’ll think up more, or you will suggest them:

- We offer a safety net to all our employees. Talking with them, offering advice where we can and supporting when needed.
- We organize training sessions for every male and female employee to recognize the signs and symptoms of potential domestic violence, before it gets too far out of hand, and to know the resources that are available if it does. We’re posting these resource lists throughout the newsrooms.
- We let every employee know the groups that can provide support and assistance when needed.
- We have as many employees as possible directly involved in reporting on the issue of domestic violence so they hear the range of views and get to know better all the people and organizations involved in fighting domestic abuse.

- We make sure that they know that the political leadership and CivPol and the National Police Service and a lot of other organizations are on record against domestic violence.
- We initiated a series of debates and workshops on the issue of domestic violence, inviting the political and church leadership and CivPol and civil society to participate.
- We’re are also planning to help organize a national event where Timorese commit themselves to end domestic violence.

Domestic violence: look out for these signs

The best preventive measure against violence in the family is recognizing indicators that will lead to violence. The best way to protect your family is for you to seek help before violence breaks out.

These are some of the telltale signs you should be aware of:

1. Alcohol abuse—any large consumption of alcohol is a potential threat to stability in the family;
2. Violent threats—threats of divorce, suicide or murder;
3. Destructive criticism—yelling, mocking and jeering, insulting remarks;
4. Financial imprisonment—interference with your work, not allowing you to work, refusing to give you money, taking your money;
5. Incommunicado—isolation and refusal to communicate and express feelings and opinions;
6. Harassment—intimidation, preventing you from speaking or seeing your friends, monitoring your social contacts;
7. Sexual harassment—forcing you to have sex or perform sexual practices you are uncomfortable with.

flash flash flash . . .

Gender and microfinance reports

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has published three reports laying out the challenges of bringing financial opportunities to women in practical terms, with situation analyses, best practices and useful advice based on projects around the world:

- “Supporting women’s livelihoods—a guide to best practices” offers practical guidance for donors and practitioners who wish to reach and serve women through microfinance programmes;
- “Increasing access and benefits for women” presents findings of a survey assessing outreach to women by the microfinance industry and taking stock of innovations by practitioners to better serve the market;

- “Innovating from experience: gender initiatives in microfinance” is a summary of discussions from a round table held in July 2001 in New York on promoting gender initiatives in microfinance.

Copies of the reports are available from Adam Rogers in UNCDF.

MINURSO women’s newsletter

The Focal Points for Women in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), Rashida Abdulkarim and Leyla Khalfallah, have put together an electronic newsletter that was issued in the week of International Women’s Day. Please contact them at minurso-women-focal-point@un.org for copies.

Caregivers support group

After popular demand, the caregivers support group has kept growing and now organizes monthly briefings with experts from different areas. Between presentations and meetings,

the group offers a contact list of volunteers who can help to address immediate needs for information or expert advice for those staff members in a caregiving situation. Please contact Milagros Villanueva for information.

Poverty, conflicts and social change affecting the health of children

A new WHO and UNICEF report says that 20 per cent of children worldwide are suffering from behavioural and mental problems. This can lead to serious public health problems in the future. Rapid social and economic change, poverty, and the large numbers of children growing up in conflict zones have led to an increase in suicides and depression among children and adolescents. Teenagers are a particular concern as a group that is neglected by health officials even though they are more likely to suffer from serious health problems than younger children.

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