



# Network

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## Letter from the Focal Point for Women

Dear Friends,

We tend only to highlight the efforts and successes of women in our Network issues. However, success is an illusion without the cooperation of men, governments, advocacy groups, non-governmental organizations and societies at the local, regional and national levels. The cooperation and support of both men and women is instrumental in pushing to end violence against women everywhere. For societies and women to succeed, all parties have to work together.

Recognizing this fundamental reality, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations has launched the Network of Men Leaders as part of his UNiTE campaign to eradicate violence against women and girls. It is a beginning that the United Nations hopes may become a landmark, if it is not already.

Violence against women is not only about its obvious manifestation, violence. It is underpinned by the prevailing gap that continues to exist between men and women in their human rights at large. Therefore, to celebrate Human Rights Day on 10 December 2009, a discussion was held with the theme of ending discrimination against women. Further, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, guest speakers from different countries shared best practices in embracing their obligations under CEDAW. Finally, to address the growing issue of violence against girls in schools, the Wellesley Centers for Women hosted a panel discussion on the issue with advocates unified to prevent violence against women and girls at an early stage of life.

With a focus on violence and discrimination against women and girls, in addition to other features in this issue of Network for 2009, we hope to continue to update you on pertinent topics that will enable you to strengthen your commitment to the ever-challenging goal of gender equality and human rights of women.

In solidarity,

Aparna Mehrotra

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## CONGRATULATIONS TO ...

**Ms. Wangari Maathai** (Kenya) for being inducted as Messenger of Peace by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 15 December 2009 during a ceremony held at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. Ms. Maathai has dedicated her services primarily to the environment and climate change in Africa. She developed an organization called the Green Belt Movement that works to reduce poverty, conserve the environment and assist women to plant 40 million trees. She also led the UN Environment Programme's Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign, where 10 billion trees have been planted since its inception. In 2004, Ms. Maathai received the Nobel Peace Prize for her accomplishments in sustainable development, democracy and peace.



UN Photo/Mark Garten

**Ms. Alicia Bárcena**, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was named Mexico's "Woman of the Year" on 8 December 2009 for her services and accomplishments in the areas of sustainable development, climate change and energy security and for honouring the role of Mexican women. The National Woman of the Year Foundation of Mexico, a non-governmental women's organization, granted the award to Ms. Bárcena.



UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz



UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz

**Ms. Kim Bolduc** of Canada for her appointment by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 5 November 2009 as his Deputy Special Representative for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Ms. Bolduc has a distinguished background in managing development and post-conflict recovery programmes in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. Prior to this assignment, she had served as the United Nations Development Programme's Resident Representative in Brazil since 2006, and also as Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative in Honduras and Peru. She also acted as Special Adviser to the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq and Area Humanitarian Coordinator for Southern Iraq.



UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz

**Ms. Christine McNab** (Sweden) who was appointed by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as his Deputy Special Representative for Iraq on 2 October 2009. She will perform the functions of the head of Development and Humanitarian Support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. Her expertise is in public sector reform, democratic governance and capacity development for achievement of the millennium development goals. ■

## Human Rights Day 2009

The United Nations celebrated Human Rights Day 2009 on 10 December 2009 with the theme “**Embrace diversity, end discrimination**”. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, encouraged the participation of all regions of the world in observing Human Rights Day by supporting non-discrimination and spreading awareness of the importance of respecting the rights of others in one’s local community. A panel discussion on Race, Poverty and Power was held at United Nations Headquarters to commemorate the day. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted the fact that, “Discrimination targets individuals and groups that are vulnerable to attack—the disabled, women and girls, the poor, migrants, minorities and all those who are perceived as different ... but these victims of discrimination are not alone. The United Nations is standing with them, committed to defending the rights of all, and particularly the most vulnerable. That is our identity and our mission.”

## 30th Anniversary of CEDAW

On 3 December 2009, the United Nations marked the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW). In 1979, the General Assembly adopted CEDAW, a treaty that has been a powerful tool for all women and continues to be a key factor in the promotion of their human rights. CEDAW is often described as an International Bill of Rights for Women. In its 30 articles, the Convention explicitly defines discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. CEDAW identifies culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations, and it is the first human rights treaty to affirm the reproductive rights of women.<sup>1</sup> It also calls for temporary special

measures (Article IV) to be enacted in all areas where gender equality is not yet a reality.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the ceremonies (hosted by the New York Human Rights Office and the United Nations Development Fund) celebrating the success of the Convention. He noted simultaneously that since violence against women and girls continues to persist in all countries, it remains of great **importance to continue to raise awareness on the issue**. Guest speakers at the event discussed success stories reflecting the significance of the treaty.

Some examples include:

- Morocco’s new Family Code in compliance with the country’s obligations under CEDAW. The Code enacted in 2004 protects the human rights of women within marriage and in divorce. The law calls for shared responsibilities between spouses.
- The ratification of CEDAW in India—the Supreme Court of India ratified CEDAW, thereby accepting their legal obligations under the treaty to protect sexual harassment in the workplace.



UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras

- The Mexican law enacted in 2007 to protect women from violence.
- Austrian action on two complaints against domestic violence in 2007 under the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/women/>.

- The film “Sisters in Law” showing how female lawyers and judges from Cameroon apply the Convention in local courts to defend women subjected to domestic violence and in cases of gender inequality. High Courts spearhead decisions on these issues.

The Convention has been signed and ratified by 186 countries; 8 have not. Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement for Women, remarked that many challenges prevail in various regions of the world with regards to violence against women. The issue takes many forms and each conflict has to be dealt with accordingly. Furthermore, it is not enough to have laws. The Secretary-General emphasized the need for the United Nations to “support CEDAW’s full implementation”.

### International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women



- The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was held on 24 November 2009 with the Secretary-General launching the Network of Men Leaders as part of his campaign to end violence against women. The Network of Men leaders consists of current and former politicians, activists, religious figures and community male advocates who are committed to

combat the global scourge of all forms of violence against women. A list of the names and backgrounds of the members of the new Network can be found at: <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/network.shtml>.

The Secretary-General noted that new grants amounting to \$10.5 million for 13 projects in 18 countries and territories will be awarded this year. He noted that his campaign “UNiTE” has five main objectives: (1) to adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls; (2) to adopt and implement multi-sector national action plans; (3) strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls; (4) increase public awareness; and (5) address sexual violence in conflict. The campaign will run to 2015.

The Network of Men Leaders are as follows:

- Juan Carlos Areán
- Gary Barker
- Ted Bunch
- Paulo Coelho
- Franco Frattini
- César Gaviria Trujillo
- Ricardo Lagos
- Andrew Levack
- Todd Minerson
- Emmanuel Ochora
- Dean Peacock
- José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero
- Knut Storberget
- Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu
- Muhammad Yunus

The background of the Network of Men Leaders can be found at <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/network.shtml>.

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## Violence and young women

- For 35 years, the Wellesley Centers for Women have offered new knowledge and solutions to pressing social issues. The researchers of the Centers focus on women's perspectives. In the early 1990s, they studied peer harassment problems and gender violence in schools in the United States and other countries worldwide. They evaluated prevention programmes, developed curricula and proposed policy changes for schools in the United States. They have also studied violence in homes, military families and in the United States Navy. Their undertakings shed light on who is at risk and why some interventions work and some fail.

In a panel discussion on "Young Women and Violence", various experts exchanged knowledge and ideas for prevention and intervention for sexually exploited girls and women in the United States. Jean Kilbourne, Ed.D., a senior scholar at the Wellesley Centers for Women, moderated the panel. She noted that the number of incidents of sexual harassment, sexual violence and exploitation continues to remain alarming. Ms. Kilbourne mentioned that one in five girls in high school have been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner. She further stated that one of every six American women has been a victim of attempted rape or rape in her lifetime and more than half of all rapes of women happen before the age of 18, and 22 per cent of the cases occurs when the girl is not even 12 years old. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* says that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between 15 and 44 years of age. More than being a humanitarian issue, violence committed against women is a crime. Ms. Kilbourne noted that the media promotes violence in the United States as media often portrays women's images in magazines and advertisements as being passive while men are shown as dominant and in control. She further stated that the Internet makes pornography instantly available to everyone, including young girls and boys, stores sell sexually oriented video games and pop music reinforces macho attitudes in its lyrics. The convergence of pop culture and the media creates a society that glamorizes

violence against women. Ms. Kilbourne's concern is that when violence is ignored or even at times promoted, it becomes normalized, which in turn leads to complacency and even acceptance.

According to Nan Stein, Ed.D, a senior research scientist at the Centers who directs projects on sexual harassment, gender violence and bullying in academic institutions, previous research reveals that sexual harassment in schools in the United States now happens more frequently than in past years. She recommends that school districts act on sexual harassment before the trend becomes more widespread. Joyce Roche, President and Chief Executive Officer of Girls Incorporated, a nonprofit organization working to empower girls and foster an equitable society, spoke of the need to increase youth's knowledge in order to address and prevent violence. Boys and girls ought to participate in awareness programmes at a young age so they can build healthier relationships as they transition into adulthood. She discussed "sexting" on cell phones, a new trend in which many youth are engaged.

Linda Fairstein, J.D., a former prosecutor, best-selling crime novelist and one of the United States' leading legal experts on crimes of violence against women and children, raised the point that binge drinking often triggers young girls and boys to engage in casual sex. She noted that another problem that affects the United States is sex trafficking. Ms. Fairstein confirmed that the use of the Internet has become a dangerous playground for young girls. In light of these challenges, Ms. Fairstein emphasized the value of education in the prevention of violence against women. She mentioned a number of organizations that are working to help prevent the spread of violence against women. For instance, Safe Horizon is an agency that provides support and promotes justice for victims of crime and abuse. Safe Harbour is another group that gives youth a safe place to go if they are sexually abused. Finally, a foundation named Joyful Heart has a mission to heal, educate and empower survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse.

The panelists agree that deep cultural problems exist in American society. They concluded that **prevention is essential to eradicate the issue of violence against girls and women. It is also imperative to educate both genders on the problem.**

## **Prohibition of female genital mutilation in Uganda**

The members of Uganda's parliament voted to **prohibit female genital mutilation (FGM)**. The new bill promulgates a penalty of 10 years in jail for anyone who engages in the procedure, with a life sentence if the victim dies. Life imprisonment will also be imposed for those who coerce women to undergo FGM. Millions of women worldwide have suffered from this cruel and painful procedure. The female victims live not only in Uganda but also in other countries throughout Africa and Asia.

## **Human trafficking in the European Union**

- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated that in the European Union many people (mostly young women) are victims of human trafficking, mainly for sexual exploitation. This is a serious violation of human rights. However, **few people are punished**. According to UNODC's Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, it is a crime not well detected in this region of the world. The European Union's Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October 2009 marked the launch of UNODC's training video "Affected for life", aimed at spreading awareness about the various forms of human trafficking

## **UN protocol against human trafficking<sup>2</sup>**

- Following the outlawing of the international slave trade in the 19th century, early efforts to prevent human trafficking included the 1904 International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, as the transport of women for forced prostitution was then called. In December 2003, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, came into force, part of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. The protocol now has 117 government signatories, including 41 in Africa.

The protocol is intended to close gaps and loopholes in existing international and national legislation and offer greater protection to trafficking victims. It defines

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol23no3/233-people-trade.html>.

trafficking as the "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt" of people through the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, through abduction, fraud, deception or the abuse of power, or through using payments or other benefits to induce vulnerable people to consent to being trafficked "for the purpose of exploitation".

In addition to combating trafficking, the protocol is intended to protect and assist victims, "with full respect for their human rights", and promotes international cooperation against trafficking. It urges signatory Governments to adopt comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation, to provide aid, counselling and repatriation assistance to victims, to step up training programmes for law enforcement and immigration officers and to improve information exchange and cross-border cooperation to prevent trafficking.

## AROUND THE WORLD ...

### **Elinor Ostrom**

- Professor Elinor Ostrom from the United States became the first woman to win the **Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences** for her work on how community institutions can avoid conflict. Ostrom is a Professor of Political Science at Indiana University. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences cited Ostrom "for her analysis of economic governance", saying her work had demonstrated how common property could be successfully managed by groups using it. Ostrom's research brought this topic from the fringe to the forefront of scientific attention "by showing how common resources—forests, fisheries, oil fields and grazing lands—can be managed successfully by the people who use them, rather than by governments or private companies".<sup>3</sup>

### **Promotion of gender equality in Japan**

- The newly appointed **female justice minister of Japan, Minister Keiko Chiba, has committed to ensuring gender equality in the country**. A lawyer and former member of Japan's Socialist Party, Minister Chiba aims to pass legislation to improve the status of women in Japan, an area in which the country has been criticized

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elinor\\_Ostrom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elinor_Ostrom).

due to its inactivity. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued a report calling for Japan to intensify its efforts to promote gender equality. The causes of the country's shortcomings in gender affairs consist of the lack of female leadership, the economic recession and the country's lack of involvement in its conventional politics. Some of Japan's current gender inequalities include the following:<sup>4</sup>

- Women earn only 60 to 70 per cent of men's wages;
- Women are legally required to wait six months before they can remarry;
- Children born out of wedlock are widely discriminated against;
- The legal age of marriage for women is 16 years of age;
- Married couples are not allowed to have separate surnames;
- There is a lack of clear definitions for incest and marital rape;
- The penalty for rape is minor;
- There is only one rape crisis centre in the entire country;
- The age of consensual sex in Japan is 13 years, as opposed to 16 years in many countries; and
- Pornographic video games and cartoons portraying rape and sexual violence against women are widespread and accepted in the country.

CEDAW member Yoko Hayashi hopes the Government will eventually provide more support to women, will identify more female advocates who will fight for women's rights and will cooperate with male champions of gender equality in the country.

### **Mexican women's role in rural production**

- Mexican women have been increasingly gaining control over rural production in the country, since men have left to seek better job opportunities in the cities or in the United States. Although rural women are highly involved in agricultural work, they are employed without

contracts and lack basic benefits and access to resources such as water, technological and financial assistance. As a consequence, women find themselves marginalized because of their household responsibilities, requirements to care for their family and their lack of education. They hardly participate in decision-making in the area of rural development. A recent survey conducted by a woman's organization called The National Network of Rural Promoters and Advisors found that rural women carry a heavier workload and suffer from poor diets as a result of both the low prices of the products they sell and the increased cost of food. Government programmes aimed at supporting the production initiatives of women have not solved the problems. Further, because rural women often rely on remittances from their husbands who have migrated to the U.S., they have additionally been hit by the global financial crisis in which remittances have declined as jobs and income for the men vanished or diminished. As such, there are increasing calls to the effect that **since the countryside is now mostly in women's hands, government and international agencies have to assume more responsibility for the provision of both training and resources that allow women an increased role in decision-making processes.**

### **Decline of abortion**

- The **Guttmacher Institute**, a nonprofit organization that works to advance reproductive health, issued a report entitled "Abortion worldwide: a decade of uneven progress". The report states that **the number of women undergoing abortions has declined worldwide as a result of increased contraceptive use**. The CEO of the Guttmacher Institute, Ms. Sharon Camp, however, noted that "more than 40 percent of the world's women still live in countries with highly restrictive abortion laws, all of which are in the developing world. Legal restrictions do not stop women from having abortions; they just make the procedures dangerous. The gains we've seen are modest in relation to what we can achieve." Further, Dr. Kelly Culwell, a Senior Abortion Adviser of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) who commented on the report, noted poor women in rural areas suffer most from unsafe abortions. He believes that the liberalization of labour laws is not sufficient to solve the problem. Also, restrictive policies

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ipsterraviva.net/UN/currentNew.aspx?new=6603>.

on abortion are accompanied by a decline in access to contraceptives. Unsafe abortion services are prevalent in many countries across the globe. The Guttmacher Institute's report recommends increased access to contraceptives, legal abortion, better family planning services, and enhanced coverage and quality of post-abortion care.<sup>5</sup>

## Women's Leadership Fund

- Naissance Capital, a Swiss investment company founded in 1999, created the Women's Leadership Fund, launched in January 2010. The company believes that investment in companies with gender diversity and greater numbers of women occupying executive positions yield higher returns. Studies conducted by two research firms, McKinsey and Catalyst, found that firms with female leaders earn larger profits than their counterparts, and the top Fortune 500 companies emphasizing gender diversity perform better in their bottom lines. In Europe, women are widely underrepresented in senior positions. Naissance Capital says that **"they will act as a beacon and a siren by investing in firms which understand the need for greater female representation, and taking an activist stance against those which do not."** In this way, they hope to make a real contribution towards advancing opportunities for women in the workplace. The Board members of the Women's Leadership Fund include influential female leaders such as Cherie Blair, prominent lawyer and wife of former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair; Kim Campbell, former Prime Minister of Canada; and Jenny Shipley, former Prime Minister of New Zealand.

## WOMEN AND HEALTH

### Women in their fifties can enjoy the best years of their lives!

By Cynthia C. Gale

No one can escape the golden years. Women in their fifties often face many health conditions including: weakening bones, diminishing balance, loss of flexibility and fading memory. More often than not, the inevitable

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.planetwire.org>, 14 October 2009.

onset of physical and mental deterioration results in major stress which in turn expedites the natural aging process. Research, however, has demonstrated that aerobic, strength, balance and flexibility exercises can make a significant difference in countering physical and mental decline.

An exercise routine does not have to be intimidating. People can choose exercise activities they enjoy and practice them at their own convenience. The key is experimenting with different types of physical activities. There is no need to jump into a high-intensity exercise programme. The old adage "no pain, no gain" is a myth. Benefits can be derived by easing into an exercise regimen and spreading activity out during the week instead of just pushing the body during the weekend.

Women need not worry. Turning the physically impossible into reality does not need to happen overnight. And it is never too late to start.

For me personally, my journey to becoming physically active began when I observed my friend Cecilia floating like a swan as she glided up the winding stairway in front of the United Nations Secretariat Building towards Tudor City. Contrastingly, every time I climbed those stairs, I panted, especially by the time I reached the last third or fourth steps. Cecilia explained with a confident smile, "For 10 years I have been going to the gym regularly and do strength training, pilates, yoga and boot camp workouts". So does Elizabeth, another dear friend, who is still looking poised and healthy after a few years of retirement from the United Nations. With jubilation, Elizabeth confided to me, "I've been exercising for more than 30 years. I have no health problems like high blood pressure or diabetes. My energy level is almost always high and I have a general feeling of wellness".

Cecilia and Elizabeth inspired me, and I hope I can in turn inspire you! Here are some ideas:

- **Try dancing.**

From a once sedentary lifestyle, ease into becoming active. Venture as I did into ballroom dance classes in Manhattan, and experiment with other forms of dancing over many months. I have





consciously tried to enjoy it. My ballroom dance teacher, Andrei, says dancing is just as good and maybe better than high impact aerobic exercise. It also actively stimulates the mind through the coordination of feet, body and arms and builds up self-esteem”.

Change your dance styles. In addition to ballroom dancing, take lessons in Middle Eastern dance, zumba or hip-hop, as I have done. Consequently, I am happier, less stressed and possess higher self-esteem. I am always thrilled to go to my dance sessions like a little girl eager to go to her ballet class!

- **Practice yoga.**

Equally valuable to dance are my yoga classes. Marlene, my yoga teacher for 3 years, confirms that “yoga helps to bring our body, mind and spirit into balance. Through yoga, and specifically through the conscious awareness of our breath, we become 'present' to the sensations we are experiencing on a moment-by-moment basis. We learn how to listen to our body and curb the flow of unproductive thoughts through our minds”.



- **Try strength training.**

Weight resistance training develops lean muscle mass, which in turn burns more calories. It will not necessarily give women bulky muscles; instead, it improves metabolic rate, muscle tone, strength and bone density. It also increases flexibility and balance which in turn make you look well because you feel well.



Strength training exercises 2 to 3 times a week for 20 minutes each can yield terrific results. A 12-month study on postmenopausal women at Tufts University reflected 1 per cent gains in hip and spine bone density, a 75 per cent increase in strength and a 13 per cent increase in dynamic

balance in study participants after just two days a week of progressive strength training.

Some examples of strength-training exercises for women include shoulder raises, front shoulder raises, biceps curls and dumbbell triceps curls. Align the body properly, inhale at the beginning of the lift, exhale during the release of each weight and use the proper amount of resistance to complete a set of eight repetitions without compromising your form.

If you're not a gym person, you can turn household chores into strength training exercises. For example, lift the basket full of laundry upwards above your head, and then slowly back down to your chest. This strengthens the shoulders, upper arms and upper back muscles. If the basket is too heavy, take out some of the clothes.

- **Start walking.**

Brisk walking reduces the risk of heart disease, strengthens the bones and helps with weight loss. Make walking a daily priority and try to maintain an enjoyable pace. Over time, you will be able to increase your distance and speed. Thirty minutes of walking daily is good for your heart and builds endurance.

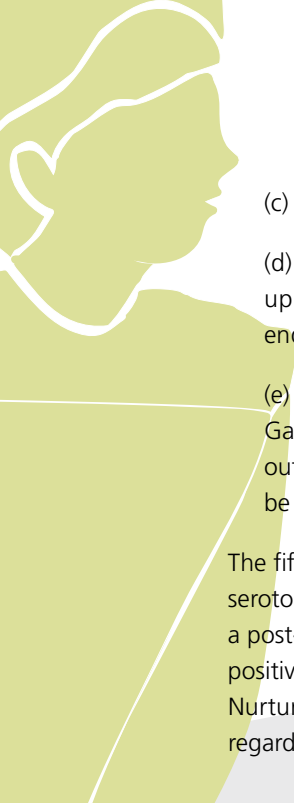


- **Bring the gym to the comfort of your own home.**

Going to the gym may cost too much for the budget-conscious woman, or be impossible due to childcare and household responsibilities. For some, the gym is simply too boring. Have no fear—there are many alternatives:

(a) Rent workout videos or DVDs online. There are many to choose from: Tae Bo, belly dancing, yoga, hip-hop, Latin groove, step aerobics and more.

(b) Invest in a set of 5-pound hand weights which while watching TV, you can strength train with the dumbbells during commercial breaks.

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- (c) Climb the stairs at work or at home.
  - (d) Jump rope for 10 minutes at a time, building up the number of repetitions to increase endurance.
  - (e) Turn on your favorite dance music such as Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" and dance your heart out?! Again, dancing burns off calories and can be so much fun.

The fifties can be your best years. Exercising releases serotonin, "the feel-good hormone". This gives you a post-exercise "high" which results in profound and positive effects—physically, mentally and emotionally. Nurture and develop a charmed and healthy life, regardless of your age!

## IN YOUR INTEREST ...

### **WHO's report on women and health**

The World Health Organization presented a report entitled "**Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda**". It states that despite the progress achieved, women's health is still an urgent priority since societies and health systems fall far short. The report reviews various health issues affecting girls and women throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood and notes that **widespread and persistent gender inequities continue to exist in health**. While women may live longer than men, they are not necessarily healthier. The greatest gap lies in the area of maternal mortality. The report also highlights the problems of sexuality and reproductive health in young girls and women in developing countries. Poor women often suffer from the hazards of HIV/AIDS and early childbirth merely due to a lack of information and contraception. Other health challenges include road traffic injuries in adolescent girls, suicides of women between the ages of 20 and 59, and cardiovascular disease and stroke in women over 60 years. In sum, women and girls face major health challenges throughout their lives and must be provided with quality healthcare.

**The report also emphasizes the critical role of proper nutrition beginning in childhood.** Good nutrition in

early childhood is central to reproductive health of future years. In addition, the report highlights the need for a supportive environment free from gender-based health inequities to assist girls to develop physically, socially and emotionally and prevent the onset of substance abuse, mental disorders and disease later in life. Furthermore, the health of older women, which is often neglected, warrants greater consideration, particularly in poor countries.

**The report identifies key areas for reform.** First, strong leadership, including women's involvement in all areas of decision-making including their health. Second, accessible, comprehensive and responsive health systems for girls and women. Third, policies which encourage and expand decision-making opportunities and help decrease poverty. Lastly, statistics on women's health utilizing sex- and age-disaggregated data. These are essential to plan, coordinate and monitor changes toward achieving health for women worldwide.

The report concludes, "Addressing women's health is a necessary and effective approach to strengthening health systems overall—action that will benefit everyone. Improving women's health matters to women, to their families, communities and societies at large. Improve women's health—improve the world" ([http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241563857\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241563857_eng.pdf)).

### **The Global Assessment on Women's Safety**

- UN-HABITAT collaborated with the Huairou Commission, Women in Cities International and Red Mujer y Habitat to conduct **The Global Assessment on Women's Safety**. The report includes an extensive review of tools and strategies which promote women's safety both in the public and private spheres on the global, national, regional and local levels. Women and girls are often hesitant to access services in urban areas. Survey respondents identified the major challenges faced to improve women's safety; namely, difficulty in raising awareness about violence committed against women and girls; a lack of communication between groups, agencies and organizations; a lack of sustainability and the absence of funding; and a lack of political will.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getElectronicVersion.asp?nr=2848&alt=1](http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getElectronicVersion.asp?nr=2848&alt=1), p. 42.

• The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) published a new report entitled **State of World Population 2009—Facing a Changing World: Women, Population and Climate**. It examines the issue of climates, which are likely to change dramatically in the coming century. Climate change is more than a problem of excess carbon emissions; it is about people whose dynamics and activities negatively impact the environment. The report notes that current population growth exceeds the earth's capacity to adjust its climate appropriately. Climate change affects people in complex ways; women, men, boys, girls and different countries are all faced with varying challenges. This issue disrupts the social and economic lives of human beings and aggravates the inequities between men and women. The report puts people at the centre of the issue of climate change and offers actions to save humanity from the ensuing catastrophe.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon states, "We have read the science. Global warming is real, and we are a prime cause ... we must set an agenda—create a roadmap to the future, coupled with a timeline that produces a deal by 2009. In this, it helps to have a vision of how the future might look if we succeed".<sup>7</sup> Wangari Maathai, Kenyan environmentalist and UN Messenger of Peace mentions that, "Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own—indeed, to embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder."<sup>8</sup>

multicultural talent.<sup>9</sup> In an article for The New York Times entitled "Making Flex Time a Win-Win", she explains that more women have joined the workforce because their husbands have been laid off due to the current economic crisis. Based on a survey conducted by the CWLP, Ms. Hewlett states that "From 2004 to 2009 there was a 28 per cent increase in the number of professional women with non-working husbands who were either unemployed or retired". The recession has resulted in employees working longer hours, including women, who are still expected to fulfil their domestic responsibilities. KPMG, a global network of professional service firms providing audit, tax and advisory services, initiated a programme called Flexible Futures for its employees. The programme offered flexible work options to its professional staff—a four-day work week with a 20 per cent salary cut or a mini-sabbatical leave at 30 per cent base pay. Staff may opt for either of these arrangements or maintain their current work schedule. The flexible work arrangements of KPMG have allowed overworked men as well as women to adjust their schedules as needed. Through this company strategy, KPMG has saved both jobs and money while maintaining their valuable talent.

The organization also guaranteed full-time job availability to the employees when they returned to work. **With the option of flexible work arrangements and a sense of job security, women will no longer feel forced to choose between career and family.** Instead, they will have the same opportunities and advantages as their male peers to climb the organizational ladder.

## WORK/LIFE

Sylvia Ann Hewlett is an economist and the founding president of the Center for Work-Life Policy (CWLP), a non-profit think tank, where she chairs the "Hidden Brain Drain," a task force of 50 global companies and organizations committed to fully realizing female and

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2009/en/pdf/EN\\_SOWP09.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2009/en/pdf/EN_SOWP09.pdf), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

## RECOMMENDED READING

<http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/template.php?name=casestudy#texas>

The Alfred P. Sloan Work and Family Research Network provides information about work and family issues in the United States and around the world. This network provides several workplace flexibility case studies of various companies. Each case study consists of the company's profile, the challenges of their flex-time arrangement, the

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.worklifepolicy.org/index.php/page/DI23>.

benefits to the employer, lessons learned and personal experiences of employees who have used a flex-time arrangement.

**<http://danapolkinghorne.wordpress.com/2008/12/12/positive-thinking-in-the-workplace/>.**

An article, "**The power of positive thinking**", written by Dana Polkinghorne, talks about how to create a positive employee attitude and how the right mindset reduces stress in the workplace.

**Will Work from Home**, written by Tory Johnson (CEO/founder of Women for Hire) and Robyn Freedman Spizman (a renowned consumer advocate), instructs and gives steps and tips which will help you start you a business you would love and achieve from home, and also find a company which has policies to allow you to work from home. The authors encourage the readers to be able to balance work, home, family, and other commitments.

**<http://www.ifor.org/WPP/index.html>**

International Fellowship of Reconciliation's (IFOR) website. IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program empowers female peacemakers and encourages women to be involved actively in peacebuilding, which is essential for their development. The website contains write-ups of the achievements and the goals of IFOR as well as articles, newsletters and success stories of simple women who fought non-violently for their rights.

**<http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Current-Women-Leaders.htm>**

This informative website lists and gives a brief background of the current female heads of State and Government worldwide in office, including leaders of self-governing external territories.

**<http://www.iwpr.org/index.cfm>**

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) researches and distributes the results regarding the needs of women. It encourages public dialogue, and provides support to families and communities. With the help of policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups, IWPR discusses issues like poverty, work and family, and women's civic and political participation.

**<http://www.icrw.org>**

This is the official website of the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) whose advocacy is their research on women and girls in the developing countries. They focus on child marriage, gender and AIDS, and the third millennium goal which aims to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

## WEBSITES

**<http://righttomaternalhealth.org/>**

The International Initiative on Maternal Mortality and Human Rights (IIMMHR), a partnership of international, regional and national civil society organizations aims to reduce maternal mortality and achieve improvements in maternal health through a human rights approach. The website presents case studies, conference reports, research, speeches, tools, and methodologies that address the connection between maternal mortality and human rights.

## 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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