



The Exchange

GENDER AND WATER AND SANITATION

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Peace Corps' Women in Development Newsletter

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*BUILDING A HEALTHIER FUTURE:
Community members in Paraguay unload bricks used to build composting latrines.
Photo by Sarah Cottingham/PCV*

Women Help Build Composting Latrines in Paraguay

By Sarah Cottingham/PCV

The name of my community is Ykua Hovy, which means “Blue Spring” in Guaraní, one of the two official languages of Paraguay. Fortunately, even in times of drought, there is water to be found in this community. The downside of a high water table, however, is that digging a pit latrine is not possible in some parts of the community, which makes combating parasitosis and ground water contamination very difficult.

When the first Volunteer arrived in Ykua Hovy, community members expressed interest in building sanitary latrines to help alleviate local spring contamination. They were unaware that a composting latrine would have the additional benefit of solving some of their sanitation problems. Since composting latrines are more expensive and unfamiliar, it was difficult to convince an entire community of their value.

In order to introduce community members

to this alternative latrine, the Volunteer first introduced a small pilot project with five families in the community. Prior to the composting latrine, these families were laboring to dig new pit latrines every six months or so. Once the many benefits of a composting latrine became obvious to others through this project, there were many families interested in building a composting latrine. It was at this point that I arrived in Ykua Hovy.

Two weeks after my arrival, 60 *losas* (cement floors for latrines) arrived through the assistance of FUNDEI, a Paraguayan non-governmental organization, and the World Bank. My predecessor was still in the community during the first stages of this project and helped to coordinate the *losa* distribution by conducting a census in the commu-

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From the Editors

Dear Readers,

Throughout the world, women play a central role in providing water for their families and communities, as well as maintaining sanitary conditions. The roles of men and women in the area of water and sanitation are distinct. Therefore, it is critical that Peace Corps Volunteers understand the roles and responsibilities of both men and women in their communities with regard to water and sanitation. Because women's roles are most obvious in this sector, it is easy to forget the important role of men, especially in the areas of construction and maintenance of water and sanitation systems. Therefore, to insure sustainability it is crucial that Volunteers use a gender and development approach in the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of water and sanitation projects. This is why we have chosen to focus volume 39 of *The Exchange* on gender and water and sanitation.

In this issue, you will find articles written by Volunteers about the importance of including a gender perspective in the planning and implementation of a composting latrine project in Paraguay and a water project in the Republic of Georgia.

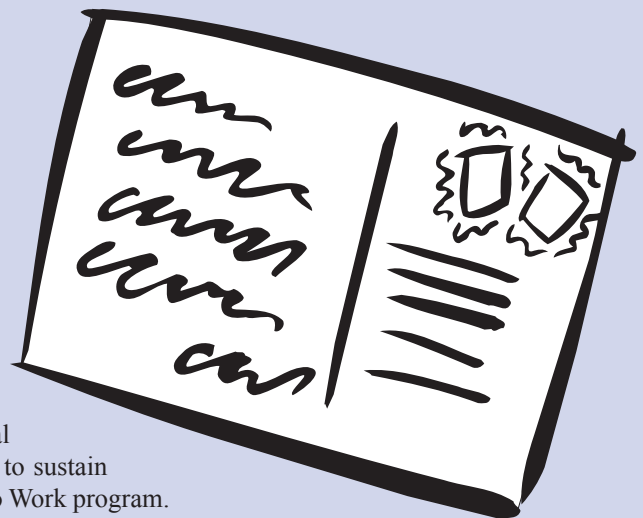
The technical article "Gender Considerations in Water and Sanitation Projects" explores how an understanding of how men's and women's roles in water and sanitation contribute to sustainable community development. The article also provides 10 practical "golden rules" for including a gender perspective in water and sanitation projects and a list of useful resources on the Internet.

This issue's "How To" column offers guidelines for conducting a nationwide essay contest based on a successful experience in Armenia. Articles describing programs for youth include a girls' empowerment group in Western Russia, a youth seminar on self-esteem and AIDS in

Panama, an annual youth retreat in Mali, a youth camp focusing on gender equity in Togo, and a camp GLOW (girls leading our world) in Armenia. This issue also features a 'recipe' for a successful GAD conference in Zambia. Benin is featured in the "Building Sustainability" column with two articles that focus on a mentoring program for girls and a network of professional women working together to sustain the Take Our Daughters to Work program.

In this issue, we are also asking for your feedback as we look to improve distribution of *The Exchange* and other Peace Corps publications. With the ever-increasing spread of information technology, Peace Corps Volunteers often have access to electronic materials more readily than print materials. We would like to assess the computer access Volunteers have in order to determine whether or not *The Exchange* would be more effectively distributed electronically. We can only make that determination based on the response we receive from Volunteers at post. Please take a moment to complete the survey on page 3, either electronically through the Internet links or manually by filling out this paper version and sending it to the address provided. In this way, we can move forward with the development of *The Exchange* in the most beneficial way possible to Volunteers.

The goal of *The Exchange* is to provide Peace Corps Volunteers and staff with the opportunity to share with and learn from each other about experiences applying women in development and gender and de-



velopment approaches into Peace Corps project activities.

We are excited to announce that recent issues of *The Exchange* (volumes 33-39) are now available on the Internet, through the Peace Corps online library: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/library>.

Lyn Messner
Women in Development/
Gender and Development
Coordinator

Robin Solomon
Women in Development/
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Technologies Assistant

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nity and by tracking interested participants. She also requested some extra *losas* hoping that people living in regions that have a high water table would be able to use them.

The nurse in charge of the community health post oversaw the distribution of *losas* and helped lead educational presentations about parasitosis and sanitary latrine construction. After the *losas* were distributed, the nurse and I inventoried those remaining, talked to interested families, and put an announcement on the local radio station hoping to spark interest in the project. After two meetings in the health post, 20 families formed a commission, elected a president, secretary, and treasurer, and planned to fundraise for one composting latrine per family in the commission.

A mixed group of participants attended the first few meetings, mostly women, and a few men. Except for the treasurer, the elected officers were all women. For their first fundraising activity, they decided to make *chipa* (traditional Paraguayan bread made from mandioca flour) to sell weekly. The meetings continued, and the money started to come in. The commission began to grow as more of the men in the community sent their wives to the meetings. The women attended the meetings, made and sold *chipa*, and organized soccer tournaments.

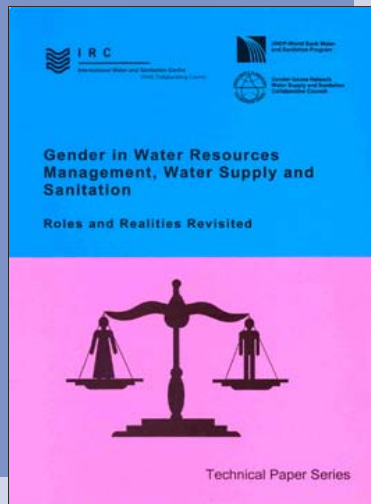
Buoyed by their fundraising success, the commission decided to seek formal recognition from the municipality and to solicit the state government for latrine materials. With the help of the nurse and the president, commission members drafted their requests and traveled into town to speak with their governor. After a few trips, the commission's request was granted and the materials arrived, a portion provided by the government and a portion bought with commission funds.

Through the course of the project, I conducted several educational presentations on the maintenance of composting latrines, including a demonstration of how to open and reseal the latrine. The attendees were always women and a few of their children. The first time that I saw the men after the initial

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WID Reviews in ICE

WD134—*Gender in Water Resources Management, Water Supply and Sanitation: Roles and Realities Revisited.* Christine Van Wijk Sijbesma (International Water and Sanitation Centre) 1998. 200pp.



This informative resource investigates how gender is present in the newly emerging principles on the sustainable management of water resources. This book reviews how these gender-specific principles are currently applied in the water supply, sanitation, and hygiene sector. A gender approach in sanitation recognizes and responds to male-female differences in demand, work, and opportunities in different divisions. It helps reduce the sanitation imbalance and offers new chances for men and women to jointly manage program planning and their own environment.

If you would like to use this book and it is not available in your resource center, you may order it directly from ICE or through your Peace Corps office. To request a copy, list your name, your sector, your address, the book title, and the ICE publication number. Send your request to:

Distribution Management Specialist
Peace Corps/The Center
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526, USA
vwomack@peacecorps.gov

To locate other resources, refer to the WID/GAD section of *The ICE Catalog* (RE 001), which contains a complete listing of technical books and publications from the Peace Corps' Information Collection and Exchange for use by Peace Corps Volunteers and staff. In addition, electronic versions of many Peace Corps publications are available through the online library at www.peacecorps.gov/library.

If you have a favorite ICE publication, *The Exchange* would like to share your review and comments on how you have used the resource. Please send a note to the WID office with the title and catalog number of the resource, and describe what you thought of the book, how you used it, and for what other projects you think it could be used. If you have found helpful resources not currently distributed through *The ICE Catalog*, please send information on them as well. Through this sharing process, we can continue to help Volunteers find useful and meaningful resources.

Dear Peace Corps Volunteers:

To improve the timeliness and quality of resources we send to post, we are making certain resources available electronically. As we make these changes, we need to understand your capability to access electronic resources. Please answer the following questions about your access to the Internet and computers, and about your opinions regarding electronic resources. Each Volunteer's answers are critical for developing resources that meet your needs. The survey requires approximately 10 minutes to complete. All responses are confidential. The responses will be compiled and shared as a summary report. Please complete the survey by **8/15/04**. If you have any questions, please contact Cristina Everett at ceverett@peacecorps.gov. Thank you for your assistance.

Complete this survey ONLINE by **8/15/04! Follow the links below:**

Volunteers in **Africa** (except Morocco): <http://www.activefeedback.com/af/user/form.cfm?formid=28563285>

Volunteers in **the Americas and the Caribbean**: <http://www.activefeedback.com/af/user/form.cfm?formid=37837034>

Volunteers in **the Pacific**: <http://www.activefeedback.com/af/user/form.cfm?formid=17033757>

Volunteers in **Europe, Asia, Jordan and Morocco**: <http://www.activefeedback.com/af/user/form.cfm?formid=1066033>

OR send a hard-copy of this survey by **8/15/04 to:**

Fax: 1.202.692-2641

Mail: Cristina Everett, Information, Collection and Exchange

The Center for Field Assistance and Applied Research, Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20526, U.S.A.

Choose the best response to the following questions:

1. My Peace Corps post is in the following region:

- Africa (except Morocco) The Pacific
 Central, South America, or the Caribbean Europe, Asia, Jordan and Morocco

3. Have you used the Digital ICE Catalog on CD-ROM for any of the following? *Check all that apply.*

- View Peace Corps publications in pdf format
 Order non-Peace Corps publications available from ICE
 Access the websites referenced on the CD-ROM
 I have not used the ICE CD-ROM at all.

5. When necessary, I have access to adequate supplies (computer, Internet, printer, ink, paper) to download and print:

- 0 pages 20 pages
 50 pages 100+ pages

7. I can access a computer with a CD-ROM drive:

- Whenever I need to (unlimited) Often (2-3 times a week)
 Sometimes (1 time a week) Infrequently (2 times a month)
 Rarely (less than 1 time a month) Almost never

9. Given your access to the Internet and a CD-ROM drive, how would you prefer to receive newsletters such as *The Exchange* (approximately 20 pages):

- on a CD-ROM
 in a weblink to a PDF through e-mail
 paper version from my country office

Please explain the reasons for your preference:

2. My Peace Corps project sector is:

- Education Health Municipal Dev.
 Agriculture Environment Youth Dev.
 Small Business Dev. Other

4. If you ordered materials from headquarters, did you have any difficulties with your order?

- No
 Yes If yes, please describe below: _____

6. The limit to the size of file I can receive by e-mail is typically:

- up to 500 KB up to 1 MB I don't know
 up to 3 MB up to 5 MB

8. I can access a computer with an Internet connection fast enough to handle large pdf documents that require the use of Adobe Acrobat:

- Whenever I need to (unlimited) Often (2-3 times a week)
 Sometimes (1 time a week) Infrequently (2 times a month)
 Rarely (less than 1 time a month) Almost never

10. Given your access to the Internet and a CD-ROM drive, how would you prefer to receive Peace Corps-published manuals and resources (approximately 100 pages):

- on a CD-ROM
 in a weblink to a PDF through an e-mail
 paper version from my country office

Please explain the reasons for your preference:

We would appreciate any other comments you have about receiving Peace Corps publications electronically!

Composting Latrines continued from page 3

meeting was during the distribution and transportation of the latrine materials to the home. Their wives sent them and their older children in ox carts to help pick up materials. The commission's women were at the health post working as well, helping to unload bricks from the government truck, count them, and toss them into carts.

I did not conduct a gender analysis of this activity during those first few months due to my unfamiliarity with gender analysis and the Peace Corps PACA (participatory analysis for community action) tools, as well as my shaky Guaraní language skills. However, the project was accomplished through the collaboration of men and women, in accordance with their gender roles. If I had it to do over again, I think a gender analysis would have been useful. For example, the meeting time was for mid-afternoon, a time that women sometimes have free, but men do not. At the outset, it was a mixed-sex group, but meeting attendance became all female soon into the project. Luckily, this did not hinder the project's progress, but instead accelerated it. However, had the majority of the group members been men, the project could have failed, largely because I did not take time of day and gender roles into consideration while planning. As it turned out, the women did the fundraising, solicited government support, and attended educational presentations. The men helped with material distribution and latrine construction, as requested by their wives.

Women's participation in other community projects was enhanced as a result of this activity. Additionally, their participation allowed them to familiarize themselves with the civic process involved in receiving municipality recognition and soliciting state funds, a process new to many of the members, both male and female.

Since the arrival of the latrine materials, the commission has continued to meet and work together, and their number has grown to 27 women. Currently, almost all of the latrines have been completed and are being used. As evidence of the group's success,

the commission has moved on to new project goals. Their latest goal is to construct *fogóns* (brick wood-burning ovens with chimneys). These ovens will allow women to cook in a relatively smoke-free environment, lessening the incidence of respiratory infections in women and their families.

The group's name recently changed from "composting latrine commission" to "group of women," or *Kuña Aty* in Guaraní. This group has grown significantly during nine months of activity. At first, I spoke a lot at the meetings in my limited Guaraní, and there was hesitation and uncertainty on the part of commission members. They would say, "But Sarah, there's no money in our community...but Sarah, the people here are lazy...but Sarah..."

Now, even though my Guaraní has improved, I hardly need to say anything at the

meetings. The group runs itself, and some very strong leaders have emerged. No one has quit and everyone is determined to finish fundraising for the *fogón* project. They have raised five times more money in the past three months than in the first six months, a testament to their improved ability to work together. *Kuña Aty* is reaping the benefits of living healthier lives and enjoying a sense of accomplishment, knowing that their goal was achieved by their own hard work and dedication.

c/o Josefina Rios
APCD/Education and Urban Youth
Peace Corps/Paraguay
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Asuncion, Paraguay



The Importance of Considering Gender in Water and Sanitation Projects

By Brandt Witte/Water and Sanitation Specialist

“If water and sanitation projects and programming are to be sustainable, equitable, and effective, they must take account of the cultural and social differences between men and women.”¹

Past issues of *The Exchange* have described the importance of a gender and development approach in a variety of sectors: agriculture/environment, business, and education, as well as program areas such as HIV/AIDS, and information and communication technologies. The quote above states that water and sanitation projects must consider gender roles if they are to be sustainable, equitable, and effective. But why is gender an important consideration in a sector such as water and sanitation, when it is obvious that clean, accessible water, and sanitary conditions benefit everyone?

Research and experience with water and sanitation projects over the last 30 years clearly shows that incorporating gender concerns at all phases of the project cycle improves project performance. In many societies men and women have different roles and responsibilities, and this holds true when it comes to water and sanitation as well.

Within this division of labor, women and children (especially girls) have traditionally played the role of carrying, using, protecting, and managing water, and have taken the lead responsibility for environmental sanitation and household health. Men traditionally play a greater role in public decision-making with respect to water and sanitation, the maintenance and repair of water pumps, and the construction of water systems and latrines. In some societies, men are more concerned with water for irrigation and animals.

Understanding and considering the dif-

ferent gender roles of men and women with regard to water and sanitation can benefit project performance by improving the operation of water and sanitation facilities, increasing the use and care of the facilities, and helping to ensure sustainability. A recent study on the water and sanitation sector by the World Bank concludes that “gender is an issue not only of equity but of efficiency, because involving both men and women enhances project results, increases



cost recovery, and improves sustainability.”²

Another World Bank study of 121 rural water supply and sanitation projects found that “women’s participation is among the variables strongly associated with project effectiveness in the sector.”³ The same study goes on to note that “women’s participation serves both practical and strategic gender needs.”⁴

Projects that address practical gender needs make gender roles easier, like provid-

ing water sources closer to home so that women and children do not have to walk as far to draw water. Addressing strategic gender needs can alter pre-existing gender roles and may address issues of equity and empowerment of women or target factors that discriminate against women.

It is important to remember that taking gender into account does not mean that men and women have to do the same work. Taking gender into account simply helps us understand women’s and men’s roles and responsibilities within water and sanitation projects so that we can ensure that both men and women participate in the decision-making processes as well as in the actual work.

Allowing both men and women to participate in the process increases the probability of the project’s success. One of the first lessons that I learned while working as a water and sanitation Peace Corps Volunteer in the Democratic Republic of Congo was that it is important to include women in all steps of the development cycle. Many of the communities where I worked identified access to an improved water supply as a priority. By working with both men and women, we decided that the most effective and least costly solution was to cap several of the uncovered springs where the community already gathered water. The village chief and several elders (all men) showed me which water sources they thought were the best sites for construction. When we announced our decision to the community as a whole, several women pointed out that two of the sources we proposed to cap had dried up for two or three months in the dry season. From that point on, I always made sure to include women in all project-related decisions.

¹ From the International Water and Sanitation Centre website: <http://www.irc.nl/themes/gender>.

² M. Fong, W. Wakeman, and A. Bhushan (1996) *Toolkit on Gender in Water and Sanitation: Gender Toolkit Series No. 2. Gender Analysis and Policy, Poverty and Social Policy Department UNDP-World Bank Water and Sanitation Program, TWUWS Transportation, Water and Urban Development Program, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.* Refer to website: <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/resources/wstlkt4.pdf>.

³ D. Narayan (1995) *The Contribution of People’s Participation: Evidence from 121 Rural Water Supply Projects*. The World Bank, Washington, DC.

⁴ Ibid.

Water and Sanitation continued from page 6

How Can You Integrate a Gender Perspective into Your Projects?

The International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) developed what they call the 10 practical “golden rules” for mainstreaming a gender perspective in water and sanitation projects. Volunteers can use these rules in planning and implementing their community projects. In addition, Peace Corps program managers and local partners can use them to formulate and implement water and sanitation projects at the national level. We have adapted the IRC’s golden rules for your use below:⁵

1. **Information:** When working on a project, make sure that information reaches both women and men. Different groups use different channels to give and get information; and they also may differ in literacy levels and areas of interest.
2. **Mini-Gender Analysis:** Talk to both women and men about how work and decisions in water supply and sanitation are divided. When asked about who decides, both men and women usually say the men. However, discussing the process often reveals that both sexes play a role. In many cases, both groups come to the conclusion that women do much of the work, but are not much involved in decisions. This provides a good starting point for discussing implications and change.
3. **Facilitation of Meetings:** Make sure that both women and men can take part in any meetings that you convene. You can do so by: (1) ensuring that times and locations are suitable for both sexes using participatory community development tools such as PACA (participatory analysis for community action); (2) helping men understand and support the value of women’s participation; (3) making sure women are informed and encouraged to attend; (4) arranging seating so that all can hear and provide translation when needed so that all can understand; (5) providing an atmosphere where women feel comfortable expressing their views (allow women to sit together, provide breaks for internal discussion, and/or choose a spokeswoman, etc.); and (6) including women’s views in the minutes and in decision-making.
4. **Planning Decisions:** Ensure that both men and women have a say and can participate in making decisions regarding the type, design, and location of water and sanitation facilities. This also applies to decisions on local maintenance, management, and financial systems.
5. **Organizations:** Include women in the planning and management of water organizations, and encourage organizations to include women in making financial decisions, as they are often underrepresented in this area.
6. **Hygiene Education:** Involve women and girls in hygiene education activities as planners, change agents and managers, not as passive audiences. Have separate hygiene programs for men and boys that address their own responsibilities and practices as well as gender relations that affect health/hygiene. Gender-blind hygiene promotion often gives women and girls more work, does not address male control of resources, and overlooks the fact that young women can often not change the behavior of male relatives or go against the hygiene views of older female relatives.
7. **Training and Employment:** Train both sexes for technical, managerial, and hygiene tasks. Adapt training to the requirements of women (e.g., location, methods, duration).
8. **Means for Improvement:** Ensure that both materials and skills for making water, sanitation, and hygiene improvements are available to both women and men.
9. **Gender-Sensitivity and Skills:** Help the people you work with become more aware of why a gender-sensitive approach to development is important, and train those in key positions to conduct a participatory gender analysis on their own.
10. **Working with an Organization’s Staff:** Try to work with both female and male staff members and prepare both for working with a gender and development approach. In situations where there is a shortage of female staff members, try to work with gender-sensitive males who, in their turn, work with local female intermediaries (local women whom the communities approve to work directly with male outsiders).



⁵ The Golden Rules can be found on the International Water and Sanitation Centre website: <http://www.irc.nl/themes/gender/goldenrules.html>.

Resources on Gender in Water and Sanitation

Below is a list of some gender and water and sanitation resources that you can find on the Internet.

- ◆ ***Toolkit on Gender in Water and Sanitation*** – The Toolkit provides strategies and methodologies that are of practical use in introducing gender perspectives when working in the water and sanitation sector. It also distills lessons from project and sector work experience and draws on examples of successful strategies, interventions, and promising approaches. <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/resources/wstlkt4.pdf>
- ◆ ***The Gender and Water Alliance*** – The Gender and Water Alliance is a network of 133 organizations and individuals from around the world committed to mainstreaming gender within the water sector at the grass roots, institutional, and policy level. <http://www.genderandwateralliance.org/english/main.asp>
- ◆ ***GenderNet*** – This site describes how the World Bank seeks to reduce gender disparities and enhance women's participation in economic development through its programs and projects. It summarizes knowledge and experience, provides gender statistics, and facilitates discussion on gender and development. There are many examples and case studies from water and sanitation projects. <http://www.worldbank.org/gender>
- ◆ ***The Gender and Water Resource Guide*** – This United Nations Development Program document is designed to assist development practitioners in mainstreaming gender within the context of integrated water resources management. The resource guide consolidates available materials and gives a quick guide to accessing existing information. http://www.generoyambiente.org/ES/articulos_estudios/docs/resource_guide.pdf
- ◆ ***PHAST Step-by-Step Guide: A Participatory Approach for the Control of Diarrhoeal Diseases*** – Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) is an innovative approach designed to promote hygiene behaviors, sanitation improvements, and community management of water and sanitation facilities. PHAST uses specifically developed participatory techniques similar to PACA. http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/hygiene/envsan/phastep/en/
- ◆ ***Gender Checklist: Water Supply and Sanitation*** – The checklist was developed by the Asian Development Bank to assist staff and consultants in implementing the World Bank's gender policy and strategic objectives. It guides users through all stages of the project/program cycle in determining access to resources, roles and responsibilities, constraints, and priorities according to gender in the water supply and sanitation (WSS) sector. It also focuses on the design of appropriate gender-sensitive strategies, components, and indicators to respond to gender issues. The checklist is designed primarily for rural and community-based urban WSS projects, although many issues and methodologies highlighted here apply generally to all WSS projects. http://www.adb.org/Documents/Manuals/Gender_Checklists/Water/

You can also find many good resources on gender in water and sanitation in the *ICE Catalog*. Listed below are a few you may find especially helpful:

- ◆ (WD134) ***Gender in Water Resources Management, Water Supply and Sanitation: Roles and Realities Revisited*** – This book investigates how gender is present in the newly emerging principles on the sustainable management of water resources and reviews how these gender-specified principles are currently applied in the water supply, sanitation, and hygiene sector.
- ◆ (M0053) ***PACA: Participatory Analysis for Community Action*** – This manual provides a number of gender-sensitive, participatory tools to assess, design, implement, and evaluate community-based projects.
- ◆ (WD112) ***Tools for Gender Analysis: A Guide to Field Methods for Bringing Gender into Sustainable Resource Management*** – This guide presents methods for gathering data and examining men's and women's roles in natural resource management in a clear and concise manner.

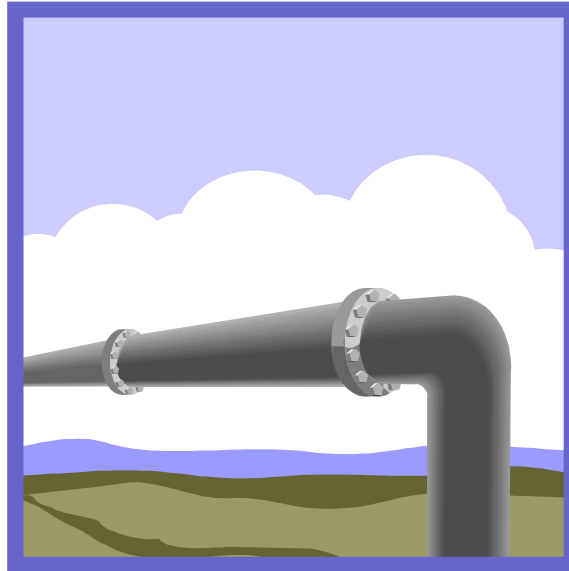
Bringing Water to Bakhvi in the Republic of Georgia

By Joshua O'Donnell/PCV

I teach English in a small secondary school in Bakhvi, a village beautifully set at the base of the lower Caucasus Mountains in Georgia. After attending a Peace Corps project design and management (PDM) conference, my counterpart and I began working with the community on a substantial water project intended to bring running water to the residents of Bakhvi and two of its neighboring villages.

Twelve years ago, before the fall of the Soviet Union and the civil war that followed in Georgia, the village had many conveniences, including running water. The government had built an extensive water system with a huge reservoir that served the community very well, but over time the system needed maintenance and then repair. Eventually the system was abandoned altogether, leaving the village without running water. Although some families have deep wells, many households and the school have no access to drinking water at all. Life has become very hard as a result, especially for women who are responsible for washing, cooking, and collecting water.

Identifying water as a community priority seemed rather obvious, but the community decided that water was the main priority only after an international nongovernmental organization (NGO) came to our village to con-



used an asset-based approach in our project design, and discussed issues such as transparency, sustainability, project implementation, and budget writing at length. In these meetings, we recognized the community's assets rather than concentrating on problems. The greatest asset was the old water system, which we decided to try to rehabilitate. The system needed great repair, but it gave us a foundation from which to work. Another asset was 500 meters of pipe that had been donated three years ago in an attempt by a wealthy businessman to start a similar project. Several competent engineers from the

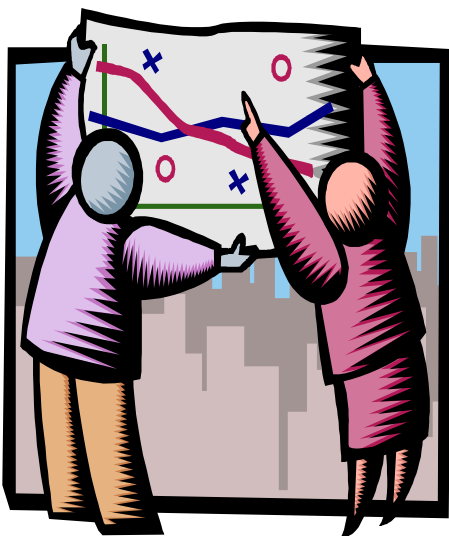
community were willing to help, including the former maintenance director.

From the beginning of this project, the gender roles and responsibilities in the community were apparent. Though the project addressed a need for the whole community, we came to regard the project as one to improve the lives of women, as their ability to complete daily tasks was greatly influenced by the availability of water. As such, women were the primary participants in community meetings, even though meetings were open to all. The project was designed by women who focused on issues such as transparency, sustainability, and funding, while the role of the male engineers was to map the existing water system.

After many community meetings and extensive project planning, a funding proposal was submitted to an international NGO. Within the proposal, a 33 percent community contribution included the pipe needed to connect the houses to the new system as well as donated labor and other materials. To ensure sustainability, we decided to charge each family a small monthly fee for using the water, which would be used to buy chlorine and to maintain the system. While this would have a financial impact on the

duct a community needs assessment. This needs assessment and the subsequent meetings led the community to recognize the less obvious benefits of running water. For one, providing water to the community would lessen the burden on women and give them more time to attend to their other responsibilities. Women in the community care for their families and clean their houses as well as work outside the home as teachers or market vendors. Running water would reduce the time and effort they would expend in order to collect water for their daily chores. Also, a water project would facilitate better hygiene and clean drinking water, resulting in better community health. Improved health would lead to better education, because student attendance would rise and teachers, 95 percent of whom are women, would have more time to dedicate to their teaching. And last, men of the community could use running water for their crops in the summer, which would give them better harvests, higher incomes, and more free time for farming.

After the PDM workshop, my counterpart and I facilitated weekly community meetings in order to design the water project. We



Georgia continues on page 10

Georgia continued from page 9



community, it was agreed that clean water was a viable return on the investment.

Three competent engineers from the community were hired to maintain and manage the system. They would be paid for their work from the monthly revenue. Hiring knowledgeable local people added the benefit of creating desperately needed jobs in the community and enhancing sustainability by ensuring the monitoring and maintenance of the water system. These individuals were elected by the community based on their involvement in the planning and implementation of the project and their experience with similar systems.

We planned to implement the project during the fair months of summer, and we hoped to have the project finished by mid-September. This timeframe was ideal in terms of both the weather and the seasonal work calendar. Men, who were primarily responsible for implementing the project, had more free time in the summer than in the fall when the harvest would demand much of their time. However, delays in funding meant we were not able to begin the project as planned. This was a great challenge for the community. During the summer, the community began to

lose interest and the people involved began to doubt the project's feasibility. As harvest approached, the men grew very busy, and getting the project started seemed a secondary concern.

Nevertheless, the project got started and now the community is in the slow process of implementation. Presently we are working on building a new reservoir and a series of filters at the head of the water system. For the time being, men are much more active in the project since the implementation requires hard physical labor. As the project makes its way closer to our village and the weather improves, women will play a greater role by bringing the men food, providing encouragement, and monitoring the transparency and documentation of the project.

As the project has progressed, significant challenges have arisen. For one, gender roles have played a crucial role in the success or failure of project implementation. Many of the women, who were critical in the project's design, have felt excluded from the implementation and management of the project, now conducted primarily by men. Women's participation has decreased as they have been distanced from the project management. As a result, the women have not been actively demanding that the work get done. Additionally, there has been some question about project expenditures once the project left the hands of the most trusted community members—schoolteachers and other women in the community. The doubt has been almost impossible to quell regardless of documentation and transparency. Changing the community group has weakened an organized and well-planned project. We have also found that working with an international NGO can be difficult. In some ways, we have felt that we have had to compromise our project goals and design to fit

the NGO's criteria and agenda.

Currently our greatest challenge is getting the community to participate in the project implementation. Due to the location and the weather, it has been rather difficult to find men willing to work. It was our hope that the women would encourage their husbands and sons to work on the project in order to have access to water as soon as possible, but enthusiasm for the project has waned. We plan to address this situation by organizing more community meetings to disseminate information and asking the local government to solicit labor on our behalf when the weather improves and work is more feasible.

Although our project in Bakhvi has not been easy, everyone involved has learned a tremendous amount from the design and implementation process. We are confident about its success and we look forward to better weather in order to continue working. Completion of the water project will improve the quality of life in Bakhvi and its neighboring villages, especially for women.

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Engendering Development

By Lyn Messner/WID/GAD Coordinator

“Engendering Development” is an ongoing column that provides theories and tools for integrating a gender perspective into programming and training.

Past articles in this column focused on the Peace Corps’ women in development (WID) and gender and development (GAD) strategy to ensure women’s and girls’ participation in Peace Corps programming and training. Topics have included how Volunteers can incorporate a gender perspective and use gender analysis approaches and tools in their work. What has not been discussed, yet, is the important role that Volunteer GAD or WID committees can play in providing support to Volunteers and staff in mainstreaming a gender perspective into posts’ projects, training, and overall program. This article will provide an overview of the roles, responsibilities, structure, and activities of effective Peace Corps Volunteer WID or GAD committees worldwide.

Types of Committees

Over 40 Peace Corps posts have Volunteer WID or GAD committees that can support the integration of a gender perspective in Peace Corps programming and training. Over the years, the purpose and activities of these committees have changed in order to respond more directly to specific needs of the host countries in which the Peace Corps serves. For example, in 2001, the WID committee in Mongolia reorganized into smaller subgroups to focus efforts on three priority areas. In Samoa, Volunteers formed *Avanoa Tutusa*, which is comprised primarily of Samoans with Volunteers as advisors and resources. Some posts have integrated a gender perspective with other priority areas in their countries such as youth development and HIV/AIDS. Volunteers in Ghana formed the gender and youth development (GYD) committee; Volunteers in Guinea formed the gender and AIDS in development (GAAD) committee; and in Cameroon, the committee focuses on gender, youth, and HIV/AIDS. Other posts established a third-year Volunteer WID or GAD coordinator position to provide support to Volunteers and staff in GAD, gender analysis, and participatory analysis for community action (PACA).

Committee Roles and Responsibilities

To ensure cultural relevance and sustainability, effective committees have clearly defined missions or goals, and community members and local organizations are involved in the planning and implementation of committee-organized activities. Developing clear mis-

sion statements and goals improves communication and understanding between staff and Volunteers about the committee’s roles and responsibilities. Posts have found that WID or GAD committees with mission statements and goals tend to implement activities that are more integrated into project goals and objectives than committees without a stated mission. Below are some examples of mission statements and goals from Peace Corps posts.

Bolivia – Gente en Desarrollo (GED) Committee

Mission: To actively promote, address, and integrate gender in Peace Corps programs, projects, and goals in Bolivia to increase women’s and youths’ access to and control of income, resources, and education.

El Salvador

Purpose: To integrate gender analysis into Peace Corps/El Salvador projects, and increase the overall awareness of gender issues, as they pertain to Peace Corps/El Salvador programs.

Guatemala

Mission: To educate, promote, and incorporate the concepts of gender and gender analysis in the work of Peace Corps/Guatemala Volunteers and staff so that they will design projects appropriately

according to gender needs in the communities and offer additional activities that focus on gender issues.

Moldova

Mission: Peace Corps/Moldova, through the GAD committee, will assist the following communities to understand the importance of gender issues and to address them in their lives: Peace Corps staff, Volunteers and trainees; Moldovan youth; and Moldovan adults.

Morocco

Purpose: The gender and development (GAD) committee acts as the central point of coordination, communication, and encouragement for GAD activities. Committee members will facilitate general communication among staff, Peace Corps Volunteers, community partners, and other Peace Corps countries (for information-sharing purposes on our activities).

Vanuatu – HOPE Committee

Mission

- Promote gender awareness, for both women and men, as it relates to development within the framework of Vanuatu culture.



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- Work with participants on running workshops in their communities or on their islands.
- Incorporate GAD in Peace Corps projects and programs.

Zambia-GADZ

Goals:

- Develop and promote projects focusing on increasing awareness of gender equality.
- Provide and share information and resources among Volunteers about GAD.
- Network with existing organizations that deal with gender and development.
- Give Volunteers tools and training to incorporate GAD into all projects.
- Support and encourage Volunteers to incorporate GAD principles on a basic grassroots level.

Committee Members

Most committees have a board or executive committee that includes a president, treasurer, and secretary. Beyond that, membership often includes Volunteers from all sectors as well as host country national youth and/or female counterparts. The core group may meet once or twice a year during an already planned event such as an all Volunteer conference. Volunteers and staff have found it valuable when a Peace Corps staff person works with the committee to identify opportunities for the integration of WID and GAD in Peace Corps projects and to provide continuity, historical knowledge, policy information, and cultural appropriateness. A staff person “assigned” to the committee is critical to integrating WID and GAD across sectors and ensuring institutional memory as Volunteers start and finish their tours of service.

Committee Activities to Strengthen the Peace Corps’ Programming

The activities of Volunteer committees range as widely as their purpose and names. However, effective committees have common elements, such as

- **Working with other Volunteers and staff** to meet the needs identified by host country women and girls (as well as men and boys).
- **Promoting the participation of women and girls** in Peace Corps project planning, design, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Building awareness among Volunteers** of issues related to host country women’s and men’s lives by working on newsletters or integrating information about gender roles into pre-service training and in-service training.

- **Assisting Volunteers** in working with women, men, girls, and boys to identify their needs and develop action plans to address those needs.
- **Working with local organizations** to build sustainability by involving host country nationals in the planning and implementation of activities such as girls’ scholarship programs, International Women’s Day celebrations, and Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World).

For more ideas on WID/GAD activities refer to *The Exchange* newsletters (available from the Peace Corps online library: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/library>) and the Global Summaries of the project and training status reports (available from your program manager).

Committee Activities to Strengthen Host Country Efforts

The Peace Corps’ philosophy is to build the capacity of host country individuals, service providers, and organizations. Therefore, Volunteers must work closely with their counterparts and community members to identify, plan, design, and implement project activities that meet needs identified by the women, men, girls, and boys in the communities in which Volunteers work. Volunteers can assist host country national individuals and organizations in their WID/GAD efforts by building local capacity

- To develop and implement activities, such as scholarships and camps.
- To create a fundraising plan and mechanisms to target locally based organizations (business, international NGOs, local NGOs, embassies, women’s groups). Groups ranging from diplomatic spouses associations to foundations often are looking for worthy efforts to sponsor. Volunteers can play an important role in introducing host country nationals to potential supporters.
- To assist individuals and groups in writing proposals.

It is important that WID or GAD committees are not involved in activities that result in Volunteers serving as fundraisers, distributing funds to host country nationals, administering a scholarship program (e.g., selecting scholarship recipients or distributing funds), or soliciting funds from organizations when the designated recipient is the Volunteer. Peace Corps policy prohibits Volunteers from directly accepting donations. The Peace Corps Partnership Program is the only official avenue by which U.S. private sector donations for community-initiated projects are accepted. See your partnership coordinator at post to learn how the Partnership Program can serve as a means by which your friends and family back home can support efforts in-country.

How To...

Conduct an Essay Contest in Armenia

By Armen Tiraturyan/Program Specialist



In Armenia there are two official days to celebrate women: International Women's Day (March 8) and Motherhood and Beauty Day (April 7). As part of these celebrations, the gender and development (GAD) committee organized a nationwide essay contest that spanned the month between the two holidays and included eight out of the 10 regions in the country. Drawing from the knowledge gained through the activity, the following instructions detail how to organize a nationwide essay contest.

Purpose: To promote gender awareness among youth through a nationwide essay contest.

Materials: Certificate paper, pens, and notebooks for all participants; prizes for regional winners and top three national winners.

Costs: Printing of certificates, transportation of regional winners and two family members to national ceremony.

Process: Interested Volunteers in each region administer essays. Three winners from each region are selected to compete at the national level. Regional winners and two family members travel to the capital for the national awards ceremony.

Preparation:

- Determine which schools or teachers are interested in participating and gain appropriate authorization.
- Arrange with teachers a day and time to administer the essay. Identify both counterpart teachers and participating students, as well as a contest site. Remember, do not give out the essay question prior to the contest.

Administering the essay:

- One full class period is needed to administer the essay.
- Explain to the class what the contest is and what is expected of the students.
- Explain the process of the regional contest and the national contest, including dates for announcing winners.
- Explain the grading scale to the teachers and participants.

- Hand out notebooks and pens.
- Remain in the class while students write the essay.

Essay question: (Do not give out the essay question prior to the contest.) Imagine the year is 2023. A woman has been nominated to become the president of your country. (1) What attributes should she have? (2) Would you vote for her? Why or why not? (3) If she were to become the president, what should she accomplish?

Evaluation procedures:

Essays should be identified by number to ensure anonymity. Each question will be worth five points: a maximum possible total of 15 points. Each question above is judged on the following criterion:

- 1 pt. Does not answer question.
No supportive evidence.
No apparent argument.
- 2 pt. Answers question.
Little supportive evidence.
No apparent argument.
- 3 pt. Answers question.
Shows supportive evidence.
Argues point, but not effectively.
- 4 pt. Answers question.
Shows supportive evidence.
Argues point effectively.
- 5 pt. Answers question.
Shows extensive supportive evidence.
Argues point effectively and eloquently.



Prizes:

All participants receive a certificate. Prizes are awarded to all regional winners as well as first, second, and third place winners at the national level.

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Building Sustainability

“Building sustainability” is an ongoing column that illustrates sustainable development practices through highlighting Peace Corps Volunteer success stories.

Professional Opportunities for Girls in Benin

By Maria Soumonni/APCD/Education and Africa GAD Team member

The *Etoile* (Star) internship program was conceived in 1999 by a Volunteer working with the *Mutuelle des jeunes chrétiens pour le développement* (MJDC, Society of Young Christians for Development), a local NGO in the capital city, as a complement to the Peace Corps/Benin Take Our Daughters To Work program (TODTW). Unlike TODTW, *Etoile* focuses on older urban girls with more defined career goals and aspirations who have limited means and exposure to professional opportunities. The program places these girls with professional women for one month during the summer vacation so that they may learn about their chosen specialty.

With the collaboration of school directors, the girls are chosen through a rigorous application process. Selection is based on grades, intended career, responses to four essay questions, and the professions of both parents. After a preliminary selection, home visits are made and the girls and their parents are interviewed. Mentors are selected to provide encouragement, support, and exposure to career possibilities.

At the opening ceremony, the girls are introduced to their mentors and receive an information packet detailing the program, expectations, and roles. Parents participate in the opening and closing ceremonies.

During the one-month program, the girls shadow their mentors at the workplace from Monday through Thursday, in addition to pursuing an independent project. Each girl is required to select a subject related to her profession and research it throughout the month. On Fridays, the girls meet to review and evaluate their weekly activities. They also receive further training in reproduc-

tive health and communication skills. At the end of the month, the girls present their research to their mentors, parents, and other guests at the closing ceremony.

From 1999 to 2002, we have noted a number of successes of the *Etoile* internship program. For example,

- Most of the girls passed their baccalaureate and are now in various institutions of higher learning.
- A good number of former participants remain in contact with their mentors and some participate as big sisters to new participants during the program.
- The activity receives media coverage and is quite popular, which has increased the number of women and men who ask the Peace Corps if they can participate as mentors. In fact, one of the first participants, who had shadowed a journalist, now appears on television in a publicity spot.
- The activity has strengthened contacts among the girls, their mentors, and their colleagues. This contact has improved the likelihood of long-term relationships, which may promote future career goals.
- After the first program in 1999, the mentors were so satisfied with the program that they requested the same girls to participate the following year. They believed they needed more time to mentor these girls, teach them more about the profession, and give them more office responsibilities.

The *Etoile* internship program was funded through small project assistance grants (SPA) from 1999 to 2002 and implemented by the Peace Corps and the *Mutuelle des jeunes chrétiens pour le développement* MJCD. At the closing ceremony in 2000, the professional women expressed the hope of taking on the program themselves. Thus, in 2001, the Peace Corps organized a one-day retreat to plan for sustainability beyond SPA support. Participants included professional women, beneficiaries, parents, MJCD, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

By the end of the retreat, the program had a clear direction for the future. Participants identified new sources of funding, drafted an action plan, and established a follow-up committee of three professional women, a member of an NGO, and Peace Corps staff. The committee began working soon after its inception. It presented the program to several international service clubs, which pledged to participate. Last year, three of the service clubs funded the activity in its entirety, and another club contributed by facilitating a training session with the girls.

The *Etoile* internship program is appreciated by all participants and will surely continue to progress through the years, giving an increasing number of girls the same opportunity to gain experience and insight into possible future professions. This valuable program enters its fifth year as a memorable activity in the history of Peace Corps/Benin.



EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION: A doctor and professional mentor explains reproductive health to Etoile girls.

Photo submitted by Maria Soumonni/APCD and Africa GAD Team member

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Benin Focuses on Sustainability

By Maria Soumonni/APCD/Education and Africa GAD Team member

Friday, June 13, 2003, was a memorable day for Peace Corps/Benin. The constitutional assembly of the *Reseau des Mamans Modèles* (network of professional women) gathered important personalities such as the president of the Constitutional Court, the president of the National Federation of Parents/Teachers Associations, the presidential advisor for girls' education, directors of non-governmental organizations, representatives of the ministries of Technical Education, Primary and Secondary Education, and Social and Family Affairs, and representatives of UNICEF and the United States embassy, among others. Following the official opening ceremony, 41 *Mamans Modèles* (female role models) from northern and southern Benin began the business of the day.

In three working groups, the assembly amended and adopted the draft constitution. In addition, the board of directors, composed of nine members and three counselors, was elected. The first meeting of the board was planned for the next month, to be held in a school classroom offered by one of the women.

The lessons learned from this constitutional assembly were numerous. The general meeting started on time and ended on time. The facilitator, a *Maman Modèle* herself, created a conducive environment in which to work and have fun. The dedication and determination of the participants was exemplary. The women had a spontaneous collection to reimburse the five village mentors who could not afford the trip but came all the same. Peace Corps/Benin assured the women that they could count on Volunteers and staff to assist with their activities. The event received a lot of press, radio, and television coverage.

Take Our Daughters to Work (TODTW) originated as a Volunteer-initiated activity and was funded through an inter-agency agreement with USAID. The program's goals are

- To motivate young girls to stay in school by showing them non-traditional professions, lifestyles, and opportunities they may not see in their villages.
- To identify role models and mentors.
- To create a forum for women and girls to discuss topics such as education, reproductive health, mentoring, and skills necessary to ensuring girls' access to education and an independent future.
- To provide an opportunity, through technical and monetary support, for girls and women to take what they have learned from such sessions back to other girls and women in their villages through activities and projects.

TODTW was launched in 1996 in the capital city with 10 girls and 10 professional women. In 1997, the program expanded in Cotonou with 34 girls and 33 professional women. It continued in



*OPENING DOORS
TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES:
A professional mentor
introduces an Etoile girl to
the use of computers.
Photo submitted by Maria
Soumonni/APCD and Africa
GAD Team member*

Cotonou in 1998 and was launched in Parakou, with the addition of village mentors. In 1999, the village mentor element was deemed successful and made a requirement for participation. Additionally, more support was needed for these mentors; so hands-on informal regional training workshops were designed and implemented. Based on feedback from village mentors and girls, it was suggested that a small amount of money be given to each mentor and her girls to organize and implement a microproject in the village in order to put into practice skills learned during the TODTW workshops. The Volunteers did not have a direct role at this level, but served as facilitators. To date, approximately 532 girls, 461 professional women, and 220 village mentors have participated in the program.

The idea of a network started in 1999, when the *Mamans Modèles* in the north expressed their concern about the sustainability of the program. They decided to organize themselves into a network. The southern *Mamans Modèles* had the same idea in 2000. Directly following the national TODTW conference in September 2002, the Peace Corps held a workshop with professional women, government officials, international and national NGOs, beneficiaries, Volunteers, staff, and well wishers to determine the future of the program.

Once notified that funding from USAID would not be renewed, one of the goals of the workshop was to explore funding options open to the program. An organizational committee was created to find sources of funding and to implement changes to the program. The committee included the APCD/education, who is also the Peace Corps/Benin GAD specialist and Africa regional GAD Team member.

By dint of hard work and determination, the committee drafted the constitution and by-laws for the network. These served as working documents at the constitutional general assembly of June 13, 2003. Take Our Daughters To Work, a Volunteer initiative, has successfully been transferred to host country nationals.

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What's Going On...

Empowering Girls in Western Russia

By Keitha Gillis Chalupa/PCV

EVE 2000 is a women's empowerment group designed to help women and girls explore important aspects of being a woman. The goals of this group include increasing members' confidence in themselves and in their abilities; introducing new skills; providing accurate health information; learning about how to stay safe from violence; and creating the opportunity to be part of a community of women who share similar concerns, dreams, and aspirations.

EVE is a 10-week program to discuss topics including women's roles in society, Internet use, career skills, decision making, goal setting, the risks of alcohol and drugs, stress and health, domestic violence, rape, relationships, and self-esteem. The topics are presented so that the group has the chance to discuss these important issues in a safe environment, to evaluate new information, and to learn new techniques and skills.

The very first EVE 2000 group was held in Kolomna, Russia. Within a few days of placing the sign-up sheet at the teacher training institute, 16 girls signed up to participate. The group met every week for 10 weeks in a classroom at the institute. The girls filled out an questionnaire on their interests and expectations at the first meeting. Some of the responses included the following: "We have never had an opportunity such as this,"



CREATING A COMMUNITY: During the program, participants found other girls and women who share their concerns, dreams, and aspirations.

Photos submitted by Keitha Gillis Chalupa/PCV

and, "I want to know more about women around the world."

The girls enthusiastically took part in the discussions and activities. During the "Crimes Against Women" week, the members attended a local course in self-defense. They had a great time while learning about how to protect themselves.

EVE 2000 was adopted by 20 Volunteers in Western Russia. It is a great, cost-free way to develop self-esteem in women and girls ages 16 and above, and provide them with a safe environment to explore their role as women in the world, their country, and their community.

The *ICE Catalog* contains numerous resources to help Volunteers interested in working with girls on issues such as building self-esteem and setting goals. The following are a few examples:

- *Camp GLOW Handbook for Volunteers* (M0056)
- *Choices: A Teen Woman's Journal for Self-Awareness and Planning* (WD135)
- *Choose a Future: Issues and Options for Adolescent Girls* (WD127)
- *Beyond the Classroom: Empowering Girls* (M0080)

In addition, many Peace Corps publications are available electronically through the online library at www.peacecorps.gov/library.

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LEARNING TO DEFEND ONESELF: During the "Crimes Against Women" week, EVE 2000 members attend a local self-defense course.

Photos submitted by Keitha Gillis Chalupa/PCV

Girls in Armenia “GLOW”

By Kelly Pearce/PCV

The three young women grew up in the same Armenian town – the quiet thinker, the spirited live wire, and the expressive socialite. Two of them spent their formative years living several blocks apart. Yet it was not until a camp called GLOW (girls leading our world) entered their lives that they got to know each other and realize that friends do not have to share the same personality traits or the same life goals. These three young women met in cities far from their own. Now, back home together, they are learning that their bonds have made differences in their lives, and in their community.

Liana, 22, and Ruzan, 23, who live in the same section of Artashat, became fast friends at the summer 2001 camp in the southern Armenian city of Sissian. Both of their essays about where they saw themselves in 10 years won them a chance to join a handful of young women from across southern Armenia for four days of seminars about women's rights, career opportunities, and self-esteem as well as a waterfall outing and wacky girl times in a hotel.

I met them about a month after their camp when I moved to Artashat. Day after day, and then month after month, the young women would smile as they recalled camp moments. This was especially true of Ruzan, a boisterous girl who shows affection by slapping those she likes on the back. She talked of the friends she had made and showed off snapshots of giggly girls. She urged me to include her in the next GLOW adventure.

All the while, Ruzan and Liana maintained

their relationship, a relationship between a girl content to spend her hours inside and another bursting to use her fluent English to volunteer in her community. Liana, the most warm-hearted Armenian I've encountered, cut up scraps of paper with English words on one side and their Armenian equivalents on the back. All of them went to Ruzan, who was determined to build her English vocabulary after her summer encounter with the Peace Corps Volunteers who orchestrated the camp. Today that stack of words numbers more than 600.

A year passed and as spring bloomed, I learned that GLOW graduates could attend the summer camp again because some of the themes and activities had been fine-tuned. Ruzan was beside herself with happiness and quickly penned another essay. “I wanted to see all the same people,” she said. Liana beamed, too, in her quiet way. “I have liked the camp because I did not know the ways of life of people in other places,” she said. “I wanted to know how they think, how they explain their thoughts.”

In May, the pair heard they would be going to the 2002 camp, this time near Vanadzor in northern Armenia. Joining them would be three others from Artashat, including Silva, a graceful and sophisticated 21-year-old woman who likes to practice her English with me. I wondered how this new addition to my world would fit into Ruzan's and Liana's.

In July, I found my answer: the fit was puzzle-perfect. Ruzan, someone who is coming into her own at an older age, immediately

found a pal in Silva, a career-minded person who wants to be an economist and is always eager to broaden her horizons. Arm in arm, they explored the campground. Often, I observed their heads close together, the new friends deep in conversation.

Liana was never far away. In her cute blue hat, she and the others in the trio gossiped, acted silly, and learned. When it came time to discuss a future community project for them to tackle, they worked together to brainstorm ways to combat our town's main problem: trash, trash, and more trash.

When it came time to say our goodbyes, Silva wept, for she knew the camp atmosphere that afforded her the chance to make memories with Liana, Ruzan, and others could never be duplicated in exactly the same way.

Now, though all of us are settled back into our Artashat lives, GLOW lives on. It lives on in Ruzan, on the phone frequently hoping to find Silva at home. It lives on in Silva, who was not home because she was visiting family and GLOW friends in Jermuk and Goris. It lives on in Liana, who bear-hugged Ruzan and Silva when we restarted our adult English Club. These young women add meaning to my life, and they are adding meaning to each other's.

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Panama Youth Seminar on Self-Esteem and AIDS

By Jaime Holland/PCV

Panama has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in Central America. To address this growing problem, Peace Corps/Panama has been conducting workshops for both adults and youth at the national and regional level. The following article is about one of three seminars conducted at the regional level.

After concluding two successful women in development/gender and development national seminars focused on HIV/AIDS, Volunteers in Veraguas believed that even more could be done. In response to the need for more HIV/AIDS education in the area, a regional seminar was held in the provincial capital of Santiago. Although the one-day seminar targeted HIV/AIDS, all four sessions concentrated on important issues facing male and female Panamanian youth today.

The first session focused on developing self-esteem. Through the speaker, a Volunteer, and numerous activities, the young men and women learned how to develop high self-esteem and how to encourage self-esteem in others.

The second and third sessions of the day were conducted by AFALPA, a nongovernmental organization that teaches about reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



EXPLORING ATTITUDES: Girls participating in the seminar discuss positive and negative attitudes of boys toward girls.
Photo by Allan Grundy/PCV

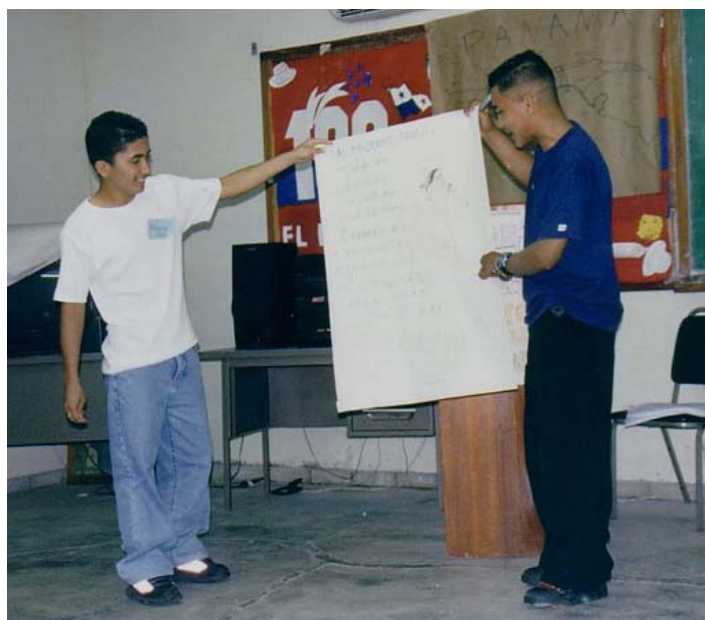
The final session of the seminar focused on HIV/AIDS. This session was led by a speaker from *Probidside*, an NGO in Panama that provides HIV/AIDS education and fights for the human rights of people living

with HIV/AIDS. The first part of the session was educational, and the young men and women learned about HIV/AIDS and how the virus is transmitted. The second part of the session included a moving testimonial about living with HIV/AIDS in Panama. The testimonial opened the eyes of the participants to the discrimination present in the country.

In the end, the young men and women were encouraged to share what they had learned with their communities. Some remarked that they wanted a similar seminar in their hometowns.

This first regional seminar was such a success that Peace Corps/Panama plans to follow up with more seminars on different themes.

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CHANGING PLACES: Boys participating in the seminar share how they completed the sentence "If I were a girl, I would be..."
Photo by Allan Grundy/PCV

Making Strides: Annual Youth Retreat in Mali

By Synda K. Mahan/PCV

It is said that life is a journey of 1,000 miles and that the journey begins with a single step. In some cases, it can be 1,222 kilometers and begin with a two-day bus ride.

That was the farthest distance traveled by one participant attending the fourth annual girls and boys youth retreat organized by Peace Corps/Mali's gender and development (GAD) committee. The 74 participants, ages 12–19, came from cities, towns, and villages located throughout six regions of the country. For one week they embarked on an adventure of intense education, inspiration, and cross-cultural interaction designed to stress the importance of gender equality for the next generation.

Participants applied by submitting an essay, audiotape, drawing, or other personal statement that answered the question: "What can youth do to improve Mali?" For many of the boys and girls, it was their first time away from home (for one, it marked his first time in a car). The participants were faced with the challenge of meeting other young people from diverse backgrounds with varied levels of schooling and different ethnolinguistic traditions.

The GAD committee reached another milestone with this year's retreat by including "at-risk" youth who had been involved in the trafficking of persons and have had run-ins with the law. Their involvement was the result of a collaboration between the Peace Corps and UNICEF's Children's Protection Division.

Upon arrival, the participants formed teams, and afterwards each team chose a name and a "dugutigi" (leader), a reference point that every member, regardless of their background, understood.

Over the course of the week, the teens made much advancement in self-exploration and planning for their futures and for the future of their country. They learned about nutrition, hygiene, and the importance of washing one's hands with soap. They explored maintaining a balanced diet by asking questions such as whether fish is meat. They looked at treated and untreated water under a microscope to see how simple water

purification can prevent widespread parasites and river blindness. In addition, Malian doctors and peer counselors talked to them about AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and reproductive health.

Each participant shadowed a Malian professional and visited places such as a *Bogolan* (mud cloth) gallery, dentist's office, and local hospital to see how professionals balanced traditional dignity and their ambition. The participants discussed topics such as gardening, grafting field crops, and improving poultry farming. And finally, they used computers and the Internet, many for the first time.

The participants were encouraged to use their leadership skills, and were given responsibilities such as washing dishes, translating, and conducting community education sessions to reinforce their newly learned skills. An open environment was fostered in order to encourage questions. The participants brainstormed steps to take when they returned home, exploring everything from creating youth groups to modifying their own behavior and serving as examples.

In order to foster teamwork, the young

men and women worked together to present the differences between their regions using pictures, skits, songs, and dances. After ice-breakers and games, the participants discussed the lessons they learned from the exercises, including "how to work as a team" and "we are all different, but have many things in common."

This year almost 30 local businesses assisted with various contributions to this event that included transport from a bus company; the donation of rice, sugar and salt; and hosting of youth for career day by various Malian professionals. The GAD committee also collaborated with two Malian nongovernmental organizations, as well as UNICEF. Furthermore, two schoolteachers and four participants from last year served as counselors, building capacity in-country to make this project sustainable in the long-term.

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CONNECTING TO THE FUTURE: During the retreat, many participants used computers for the first time.

Photo submitted by Synda K. Mahan/PCV

“Powa Fu” Creates Powerful Women in Belize

By *Sariane Leigh and Ira Stollak/PCVs*

Twenty-one young women, ages 18–25, recently completed the first round of Powa Fu Women, a project designed to empower young women in Belize to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS by increasing their ability to better control their lives and their health.

On July 26, 2003, the women attended an all-day retreat at the scenic Palacio Mountain Resort, located in the lush foothills of the Belizean interior. While enjoying the sounds of wind blowing through the trees and water flowing in a nearby creek, the women learned how to protect themselves from HIV infection. They participated in activities to improve their assertiveness and self-esteem. In addition, they developed condom negotiation skills to use with their current and/or potential sexual partners.

Two Peace Corps Volunteers supported the logistical planning of the conference, which provided free childcare and food to the participants. Throughout the retreat, the Volunteers worked closely with the young women while they learned to take better charge of their sexual health.

A week later, the women returned for two afternoon follow-up workshops. They continued to develop their assertiveness and negotiation skills for safer sexual behavior, and all of the women showed significant improvement in their ability to communicate to their partners the importance of wearing a



IMPORTANT LESSONS: Health educator Joan Burke explains the facts of HIV/AIDS. Photo by Ira Stollak and Sariane Leigh/PCVs

condom. One participant said the workshops were “very educational because I got to learn a lot of things about being assertive.”

Eula Sabal, a 21-year-old participant said: “Everyone knows about HIV, but they really don’t know the stages and process of the virus. I believe that most females should attend [such workshops] to get educated about HIV/AIDS. They could at least [learn to] protect themselves in a relationship.”

The name Powa Fu Women is derived from the Belizean Kriol phrase *powa fu*, meaning “power for” and the English word “powerful.” The name was created by the Dangriga HIV/AIDS Society to invite younger women to the project to learn that by educating yourself, you are also empowering yourself. Powa Fu Women is a project of the Dangriga HIV/AIDS Society and is

funded by PASCA (Proyecto Accion SIDA Centro America), a nongovernmental organization that funds HIV/AIDS prevention projects throughout Central America. Powa Fu Women is the first project to be funded by PASCA in Belize.

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Editor's Note: This project is an excellent example of how to address women's need to learn better communication and negotiation skills with the goal of practicing safer sexual practices and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. In a gender and development approach to HIV/AIDS prevention, it is also of critical importance that the gender needs of men are addressed through educational training and other activities. Leaving men out of this equation does not take into account gender roles and power relations. For example, more often than not men make the ultimate decision to use a condom. Therefore, both men and women need to be made aware of HIV/AIDS prevention strategies. If such interventions do not include both men and women, the activity may not be effective or sustainable. Also, in this case, it may put women at risk if they insist on new practices of which the men are unaware.



LEARNING THROUGH SONG: Workshop participants sing, “I am Woman, Hear Me Roar.” Photo by Ira Stollak and Sariane Leigh/PCVs

Sweet GAD Success: A Recipe from Zambia

By Heather Lahr/PCV

Ingredients:

20 Volunteers
15 provincial-level counterparts
2 professional facilitators
heaps of dedication and hard work
dash of craziness
1 capital city (preferably Lusaka)

Marinate the first two ingredients in *dedication and hard work* for approximately six months to one year. Add a *dash of craziness* just before taking ingredients out of the "bush" and placing them in the *capital city* (preferably Lusaka). For an exotic touch, add two Peace Corps *professional facilitators*. Let above ingredients cook for four days at a low temperature. The result is a national gender and development workshop that will surprise even your most timid of dinner guests.

* * *

After attending the Southern Africa regional women in development/gender and development workshop nearly two years ago, Peace Corps/Zambia was presented with the challenge of starting a gender and development (GAD) committee of its own. Volunteers rose to the challenge in stellar form.

A committee was formed in July 2002 by representative Volunteers from each of the six provinces where Volunteers are currently serving in Zambia. The goal was to raise the Volunteers' awareness of gender roles and relations within the country.

The first project to be tackled was a national level workshop with both Volunteers and counterparts. The hope was to provide a forum for increasing participants' understanding of GAD concepts and to develop and share provincial plans for future GAD committee activities.

In June 2003, 15 counterparts from organizations such as FAWWEZA (Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia), Africare, and the PDCC (Provincial Development Coordinating Committee) joined 20

Volunteers from six provinces in Lusaka for the much-anticipated national GAD workshop. People came expecting to learn more about GAD, but what they did not expect was how amazing it would be to gather so many interested and dedicated people.

There is something to be said for the professional women working in Zambia. Possibly because of previous hurdles they have faced or maybe because they are just naturally amazing, whatever the case, their positive energy rubbed off on everyone. The result was a light and entertaining atmosphere that was surprisingly productive. Bonds were formed between Volunteers and counterparts that will help in future provincial level projects. Ties were also formed between counterparts, creating a much-needed network of creative, dedicated people throughout the country.

With the help of the facilitators, the group



was led through an appreciative inquiry process that started with group presentations detailing all the current projects in which each province was involved. The projects ranged from small income-generating activities, such as knitting or seed necklace projects, to large provincial-wide events such as girls' career week or art and essay contests. This not only gave everyone a chance to learn what other provinces were doing, thereby gaining new ideas, but it also provided a level of pride and accomplishment that prodded everyone to take the challenge that much further.

The week continued with the presentation of participatory analysis for community action and other gender analysis tools, followed by training on how to best implement them. After the facilitators presented the tools to the group, it was then the group's turn to test its newly acquired knowledge at a local secondary school. The daily schedule and community mapping tools were used at the school. This provided both practical experience, and a wealth of knowledge regarding current perspectives on gender roles and relations.

The workshop also featured several guest speakers. There was a representative from Women in Law and Development in Africa who came to help put perspective on the many current injustices experienced by



ANALYZING GENDER ROLES: A group of high school students works together to record the daily activities of boys.

Photo by Natalie Jackson/PCV

Zambia continues on page 22

Zambia continued from page 21

young girls throughout the country. The Development Offices of Zambia provided vital information on sustainable group formation, and an Africare representative discussed the possibilities of women's groups raising bees.

The workshop came to a close with an intense planning session by each provincial group. The newly acquired knowledge and influx of ideas created by gathering so many committed people resulted in provincial level goals and project plans to better address gender needs. It is hoped the knowledge gained will be disseminated in the provinces to create a much more sensitized region.

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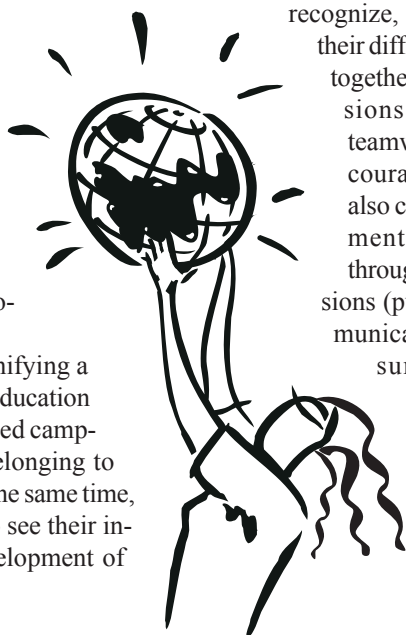
*DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS: Volunteers and counterparts work together on gender analysis activities during the four-day workshop.
Photo by Natalie Jackson/PCV*

Togo Youth Learn About Gender Equity

By Kyra Turner and Laurie Martin/PCVs

Two second-year girls' education and empowerment Volunteers organized three week-long summer camps entitled Camp UNITE (the unification of a nation: initiative, work, and education). There was one week for male students, one week for female students, and one week for female apprentices. The camp's purpose was to expose different populations of youth to the various issues of gender and equality in society.

Using the theme of unifying a nation to promote girls' education and empowerment allowed campers to gain a sense of belonging to something larger, and at the same time, they were encouraged to see their individual role in the development of

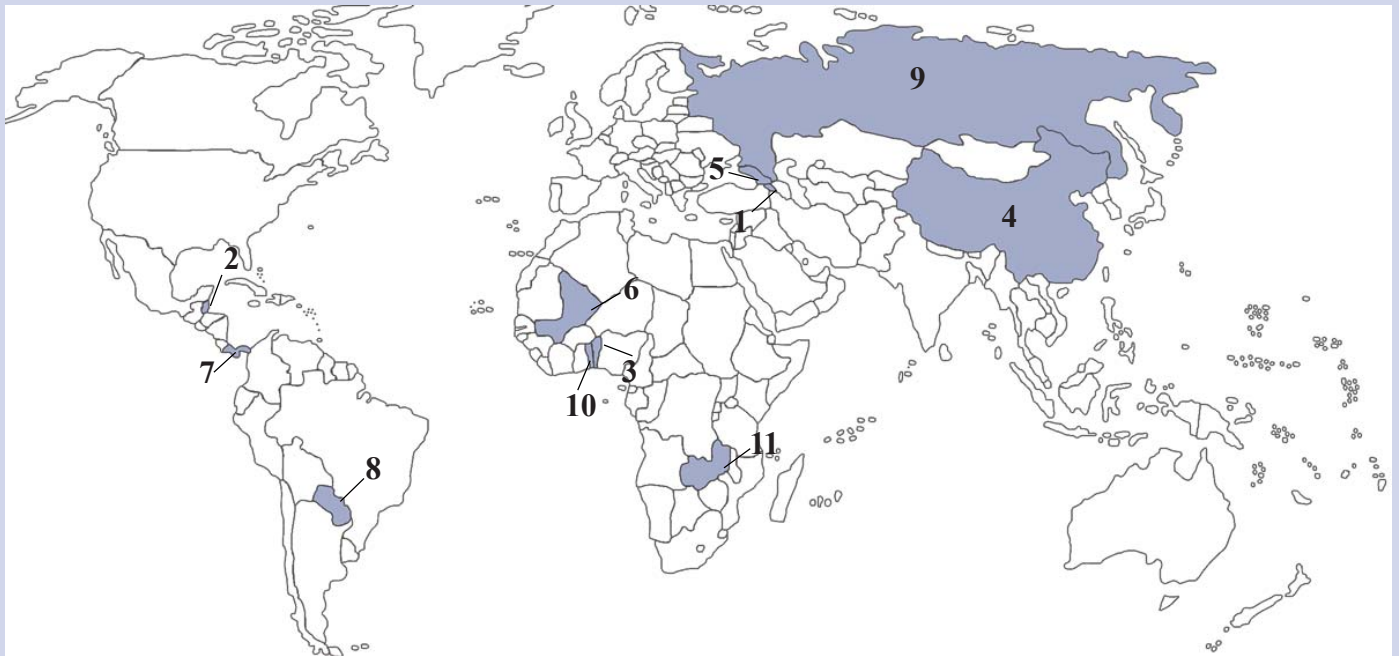


women and the nation as a whole. The significance of the word "unity" was explained at the beginning of each camp, and the entire week was structured around this one governing theme. The campers learned to recognize, accept, celebrate, and use their differences to bring them closer together to achieve more. The sessions and activities required teamwork, cooperation, and encouragement of others. They also cultivated personal development within a group setting through a variety of life skills sessions (public speaking, good communication, resisting peer pressure, and self-esteem/respect), health awareness, arts, sports, and team-building activities.

Another focus of the camp was cultural exchange. The partici-

pants were exposed to an American-style summer camp with various innovative, unconventional techniques of learning, teaching, and sharing rarely encountered in schools or apprenticeships. With these techniques, Camp UNITE strives to give valuable information and skills that will help campers grow personally, and as a result, become agents of change in their communities. Through the collaboration and hard work of Volunteers and host country nationals, over 150 young men and women from all over the country were given the chance to come together to learn, share, and grow. This opportunity created a powerful union of youth who are now ready to join the fight for equality, change, and development.

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Articles in *The Exchange*, Gender and Water and Sanitation • June 2004, Were Submitted From...

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. Armenia | 5. Georgia | 9. Russia |
| 2. Belize | 6. Mali | 10. Togo |
| 3. Benin | 7. Panama | 11. Zambia |
| 4. China | 8. Paraguay | |

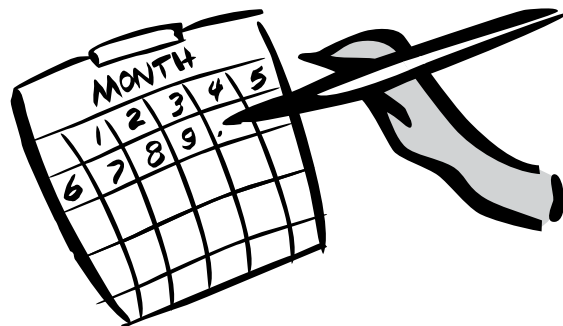
Upcoming Issues

- The next issue of *The Exchange* (Volume 40) will focus on gender and training.

Editor's note: All submissions are welcome, and topics are not limited to the theme of the issue. Feel free to submit letters to the editor, items for the "How To" or "Building Sustainability" columns, or pieces on any activity that involves gender and development.

Upcoming Opportunities

- August 26: Women's Equality Day (USA)
- October: Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- October 16: World Food Day
- November 20: UN Children's Day
- November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women



Reflections from a Life Skills Conference in China

The following remarks were written by two girls who participated in a life skills conference sponsored by Peace Corps/China.

To Be Remembered

By Zuo Li

When the life skills conference came to the end, I felt regret that this wonderful conference was too short. For me these two and a half days were a whole new experience, and it has somewhat changed my attitude toward my life.

Before I came, I had seldom thought about fighting for my own rights. I always put others first. I usually remained silent when something bothered me. Some of my friends said to me, "You are way too nice and that's not right. You should love yourself more."

I never knew how to love myself until I came to the conference. I have learned a lot from the session on assertiveness. I did a role play and I was the wife busy with the baby, the job, and the housework, and I felt very tired. I told the husband how I felt and asked him to help. After the role play I started thinking about myself and my own life. And I have decided that from now on I will tell others how I feel and what I want in an assertive way when my rights are being put down.

I met some awesome women at the conference and we have become friends. We have learned a lot from each other's experiences, like honesty, confidence, teamwork, and trust. Thanks for giving me the chance to let me learn more about myself and to meet such good people. I will never ever forget this conference, because it has changed my life in a positive way.



Communication

By Wu Bin

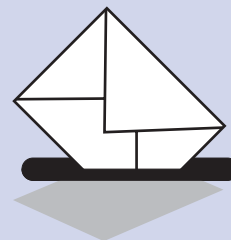
I do appreciate the Peace Corps and my friend Liz for giving me the chance to take part in the life skills workshop. I have harvested much more than I expected. Originally, I took the meeting just as a chance to practice my English. It turned out to be a door open to a better understanding of communication, study-life, and work. The part I enjoyed most was the part I learned most from: the role plays. I participated in nearly every role play. In China, we do not have this kind of activity. I used to take it for granted that I am not good at communication; I am rather introverted. But in this case it proved not to be the case. I found the reason for my attitude was the way I watch things. Before, I only know how to look ahead, look straight forward. After the enjoyable and successful communication with my partner, I learned to look both forward and around. Sounds very simple perhaps, however sometimes, very simple philosophy takes a long time to be recognized. I am glad that I had the opportunity to attend the conference and to improve my communication skills and look at things in a new way.

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Express Yourself

What is happening with WID or GAD in your country that you would like to share with others? Tell us your success stories. What works? What does not? When you tell us about your project, please give a location and an address. Photos should include the names of the key individuals in the picture, a brief description, the location, and the name of the photographer. Send contributions, comments, suggestions, and requests to:

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