

# Working for Women

## *Worldwide*



The U.S. Commitment





*The empowerment of women is critical to the promotion of prosperity and peace in every land.*



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## Preface

I am pleased to present this overview on U.S. contributions to advancing the status of women worldwide. It is both an appropriate commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and a clear demonstration of our continuing support for, and progress toward, their overall objectives. We look forward to further strides in the years ahead.



Achieving global respect for women is a U.S. foreign policy imperative.

President Bush emphasized in his first State of the Union Address, and on numerous occasions since, that “respect for women” is one of the “non-negotiable demands of human dignity.”

In the international arena, the United States has aided efforts that have garnered substantial progress for women around the world. Some of this progress is historic. In Afghanistan, for example, millions of Afghan women cast their ballots in their country’s first-ever free presidential election in October 2004. The United States provided political and advocacy training for Afghan women and funds to support voter registration and the election process. One Afghan widow casting her ballot said: “When you see women here lined up to vote, this is something profound. I never dreamed that this day would come.”

More broadly, the United States provides hundreds of millions of dollars each year for concrete projects benefiting women everywhere: education and literacy training; assistance to public-private partnerships for business development; microcredit loans for aspiring women entrepreneurs; maternal and child

health care programs; HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment centers; anti-trafficking projects; leadership, political, and advocacy training; and more. And there is a human reality behind each of these efforts: millions of individual women who are now able, with our support, to read and write; keep their families healthy; start new businesses; vote in free elections; and even serve their countries as government ministers, judges, journalists, and in many other ways—often for the very first time in their lives.

At home, the American people support the further advancement of women in social, political, and economic life, as documented in the pages that follow. We also realize that more can and must be done to enhance women’s equality of opportunity. That is why, as this publication also makes clear, the United States maintains a wide array of programs toward this end.

Our work will not be complete until full participation is possible for every woman—in the United States and elsewhere.

PAULA J. DOBRIANSKY  
*Under Secretary for Global Affairs*  
*U.S. Department of State*

## Introduction

In 1995, at one of the largest international conferences ever held, women from around the world, representing both governments and the private sector, gathered in Beijing to set forth a platform for the political, economic, and social empowerment of women.

by Ambassador Ellen R. Sauerbrey

*U.S. Representative to the United Nations  
Commission on the Status of Women*



Conference delegates recognized that women, their children, and their families have the best chance to thrive in societies that protect fundamental freedoms and human rights, and where political and economic opportunities abound.

Yet in many regions of the world, especially in regions of conflict, women have little political clout, lack protection for their most basic human rights, are disproportionately undereducated, and are the most economically vulnerable. In many countries, women also face social and cultural barriers to their advancement, including discrimination, having to balance family life with the need or desire to work outside the home, and the biggest barrier of all—illiteracy. Additionally, women are the targets of sexual exploitation, trafficking in persons, and domestic violence.

The United States finds these barriers intolerable. The political, economic, and social empowerment of women is critical to the promotion of prosperity and peace in every land.

The United States is determined to eliminate the repression and oppression of women and children. In the words of President Bush, “America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; and respect for women, private property, free speech, equal justice, and religious tolerance.”

In a resounding endorsement of our commitment to women’s equality, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said during her confirmation hearings that improving the status of women worldwide will be “one of the most important things that we do over the next few years.” In fact, she added, “We’ve already tried to do a lot. ... We’re very outspoken about the need of every society to make sure that women’s rights are protected.

... It is in our moral interest to do so, but it's also in the interest of these societies, economically and in terms of modernity, that women take a rightful place and are fully contributing to the prosperity of these societies.”

In recognition of the global focus on women's issues that began in earnest 10 years ago in Beijing, this publication offers examples of the many ways the United States promotes a better future for women everywhere, in terms of the key concerns expressed in the Beijing Declaration. You will read poignant stories of inspiring women who, with the help of U.S.-funded programs, are helping themselves and others achieve more than they thought possible.

We hope these stories will give encouragement and inspiration to women and girls everywhere who aspire to live a better life, and to the decision-makers in their countries who can help pave their way with opportunity.

### Education: A Priority Around the World

It is well known that education can empower women. Yet two-thirds of all those who are illiterate today are women. The forecast for the future is equally disturbing: Worldwide, of the more than 104 million children of primary school age who are not in school, 57 percent are girls.

As our stories on education point out, the need to expand access to education is critical, because educating women and girls benefits every aspect of society and fosters economic development. Only through literacy, knowledge, access to the best information and latest technology, and opportunities to gain competency skills can women truly escape lives of poverty, raise healthier and better-educated children, and begin to take part in decision-making processes that can better their lives.

Throughout the world, U.S. programs bring greater access to education and thus greater hope to women and girls. The U.S. Education and Child Nutrition Program, for example, feeds seven million children in schools in 38 countries. It offers an incentive to impoverished families to make sure their children go to school. The U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative is another one of many U.S. programs focused on improving the lives of women and girls through literacy training and scholarships that enable them to stay in school.

Some of women's greatest educational needs are found in post-conflict societies. That's why in Afghanistan, for example, after the fall of the Taliban, the United States has worked to reopen schools: 4.8 million Afghan children are now enrolled in school, and nearly 40 percent of them are girls—many more than at any point in Afghanistan's history. Furthermore, a new Women's Teacher Training Institute/Afghan Literacy Program announced by First Lady Laura Bush was opened in Kabul in 2004. Now many Afghan women can receive literacy training to take back to their villages throughout Afghanistan.

Similar progress is being made in Iraq, where a coalition of countries is renovating thousands of schools. Female attendance in Iraq exceeds pre-war rates, with girls making up 46 percent of all students in secondary school. The United States not only provides training for teachers in Iraq, it also provides training to Iraqi women in media, entrepreneurial, and democratic skills.

Education is also a priority in other regions. After attending a women's leadership program in Guatemala funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), women from a small village decided that more than anything else they needed to learn to read and write. USAID helped to set up a literacy program for them. Three times a week young mothers attended classes with their sleeping infants on their backs and pre-school children at their sides. The women then decided their children should have their own classes. While the mothers attended the literacy classes, their children were learning skills that would prepare them for primary school.

In 2002, President Bush launched a five-year Africa Education Initiative to increase funding support for Africa's education programs by \$200 million, and to provide 250,000 girls with scholarships.

### Economy: Providing Opportunities for Women

It has been said that when you educate a woman, you educate a family. The United States recognizes that educating women is not an option; it is a necessity. Education and literacy empower women to improve their economic status as well. However, in too many places, even educated women lack economic opportunities.

As the section on economic empowerment shows, the United States offers many programs to help countries develop market-based economies that create a climate in which men *and* women can go as far and as fast as energy and talent can take them. Particularly in developing countries, the United States is an advocate for women's property and inheritance rights, as well as equal access to credit and business opportunities. But the United States also backs up its advocacy with a major commitment to providing microfinance and other entrepreneurial opportunities.

U.S. support for microenterprise development has exceeded \$150 million each year for the past five years. A large proportion of this assistance supports micro-credit programs in developing countries, for which 70 percent of the clients are women. Through such programs, millions of women have the means to better their own lives and contribute to the economic revitalization of their communities and their countries.

USAID provides grants for women's agriculture cooperatives, and the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Program provides study tours for women entrepreneurs. The State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative supports a program that equips young Arab women business representatives with substantive experience and tools to participate in their countries' reform process.

The 2002 Helsinki Women's Business Summit was the largest ever public-private outreach program between the United States and countries in the Baltic region. We hope this will become a model for other regions to promote trade, commerce, and women's economic empowerment.

Experience shows that nothing is more effective in building entrepreneurship than person-to-person assistance. The U.S.-Afghan Women's Council is based on this principle. Since 2002, U.S. and Afghan women have partnered to enable the Afghan women to take on political and economic leadership roles in their country. The council places top priority on education and microfinance. For example, Connie Duckworth, a member of the council, has established a microenterprise cooperative for Afghan women to make and

export rugs. The company, Arzu, placed its first order for carpets on International Women's Day in 2004.

Finally, the United States has created a new program to award additional aid to countries that govern justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom. The requirements of the Millennium Challenge Account include education for women and girls, respect for their human rights, and other performance indicators that benefit women's economic advancement in developing countries.

### Government and Civil Society: Empowering Women Leaders



Empowering women economically goes hand in hand with empowering them politically. True democracy does not exist where half the population is excluded from policymaking, political processes, and power structures. Without their political voice, women cannot share their perspective, or draw attention to their hardships, or recommend preventive actions or means of redress.

As the stories on political empowerment demonstrate, the United States believes women's political participation is essential to promoting freedom, democracy, development, and peace and to strengthening civil society.

In 2003, I was proud to lead successful negotiations at the United Nations on a resolution advancing women's political participation. The United States helped craft a blueprint of steps governments and civil society can take to advance women's political participation. One hundred and 10 countries joined us as co-sponsors of this resolution. Already I have heard that some countries are using these guidelines to design legislation and programs that encourage women to become more politically active. It is a good first step, but like so many other efforts, there must be the political will to implement change for the long term.

*Above, Parool Mia, a rice farmer's wife in Maria Village, Bangladesh, feeding her cow. Facing page, Iraqi women paste up election posters on a wall in central Baghdad.*

More dramatic than this success are the results of programs the United States directly funds or partners with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—programs that teach women political skills, help them run for public office or serve as elected and appointed officials, and that help them establish their own organizations. One U.S.-based NGO recently took a group of U.S. women legislators to Bahrain to train and encourage Bahraini women to get politically involved. Interestingly, some Bahraini men they encountered had never met a woman political leader before then.

Recently, the U.S. Congress allocated \$10 million for the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative. This program will benefit Iraqi women in key areas, such as education for democracy, leadership training, political training, teaching entrepreneurship, NGO coalition-building, organizational management and coordination, and media training. Grants have been awarded after an open competition for the best proposals from all interested organizations, and work is underway on the ground in Iraq. With U.S. support, women in Afghanistan have made dramatic progress as well. Women helped draft the new Afghan Constitution, and millions of women voted for the first time in national elections.

Many U.S. programs helping women are run by USAID through its democracy and good governance offices, while others are run by the State Department. The International Visitor Program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs brings many current and potential women leaders to the United States to see how democratic institutions and good governance work. The Middle East Partnership Initiative also supports programs throughout that region to increase women's participation at all levels of the political process, including regional campaign schools for Arab women political leaders, training programs to strengthen the role of women in political parties, and the creation of a network of Arab women legal professionals. Still other programs are offered by independent U.S. organizations, such as the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute.

## Safety: Freeing Women From Violence

Education and political opportunities mean little, however, if women and their children are not safe and free. Women cannot participate in the economy, in the political process, or in the social life of a country if they face domestic abuse; rape as a weapon of war; trafficking in persons; or such horrors as honor crimes, forced abortions and forced sterilization, or female genital cutting.

The United States is firmly committed to taking decisive action against all forms of violence against women, as the stories on this issue show. In particular, for hundreds of thousands of women and children each year, trafficking inflicts unspeakable physical and emotional harm. Women in post-conflict societies are particularly vulnerable. Lacking opportunities at home, they are easily lured by false promises of well-paying jobs abroad, and then coerced or forced into lives of prostitution, domestic servitude, and labor.

The United States has clearly placed a priority on ending this modern-day form of slavery. President Bush chose to bring domestic and international attention to this scourge in September 2003 in his address to the U.N. General Assembly. He pledged an additional \$50 million to accelerate efforts to rescue women and children from the exploitation of human trafficking. This amount was in addition to the \$70 million the United States had already devoted to combating trafficking worldwide during that fiscal year.

In many countries, the United States funds the training of police, judges, prosecutors, and medical personnel so that they know how to recognize and respond to human trafficking. U.S. funds also help to provide victims with shelters and crisis centers.



## Health: Prevention and Treatment Worldwide

Being safe from violence is as critical as good health if women and their children are to lead productive and satisfying lives. As First Lady Laura Bush said, "Studies throughout the world show that women's health and the opportunities they have in life are directly related to the strength of a country's economy and the level of education attained by its children."

The section on health points to the fact that the largest share of the billions of dollars in aid we commit to the global advance of human rights goes to women's health and related needs. The U.S. government provides approximately \$500 million annually for maternal and child health care and family planning support in more than 60 countries. Hundreds of millions of dollars more have gone to providing vaccinations, food aid, agriculture subsidies, and humanitarian assistance where they are very much needed.

Perhaps the greatest human tragedy affecting women today is HIV/AIDS. Over half of the 42 million people living with HIV/AIDS are women. Over two million HIV-positive women give birth each year, transmitting the disease to more than 700,000 infants. Most of these children die before their fifth birthday.

President Bush responded to this tragedy in his first term. He made preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV infection a major priority. To date, \$288 million have been appropriated for this effort alone. The United States, through the president's five-year, \$15-billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, is working to prevent millions of new HIV infections while providing care and anti-retroviral treatment to millions of people living with the disease, including AIDS orphans, in the most affected countries in Africa and the Caribbean.

Another problem is maternal mortality. Each year more than 500,000 women, most of whom live in developing countries, die because of complications of pregnancy and childbirth. A majority of these deaths are preventable. Access to medical facilities, skilled birth attendants, antibiotics, or other currently available technologies would substantially reduce instances of maternal mortality. Successful programs of American medical specialists in Indonesia and

Guatemala, for example, are proving this point. That's why the United States has initiated a \$5-million program to help reduce maternal mortality by training midwives.

Ending female genital cutting, a harmful and repressive practice with the potential of severe physical and psychological consequences, is another issue of importance to the health of women and girls in many parts of the world. USAID funds local organizations' efforts to end this practice.

These are just a few of the ways the United States promotes the advancement of women. This publication offers an array of examples, including what we are doing for women here in the United States. There is so much more the United States is doing that I encourage you to explore the resources listed in the back of this book, and then search U.S. government web sites. We also have included an appendix with links to many of the more recent statements made by U.S. government officials regarding the needs of women.

Through all of these resources, it should be clear that the United States strongly believes the liberty and equality of women in every aspect of life is fundamental to stable, prosperous, and peaceful societies. It is also clear that, over the past decade, the Beijing conference has brought heightened worldwide attention to women's issues, which is having profound effects in both the developed and the developing world. The United States is enthusiastically committed to helping women everywhere influence their countries' pace and priorities for development and achieve their full inclusion in society. We will continue to do this through bilateral programs like those described in this publication; we also will continue to do it through our generous contributions to international organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and UNESCO.

As new challenges emerge, women everywhere should know that the United States will continue to be their advocate, remaining in the forefront of efforts to help them help themselves, and their families and communities, to attain a better future.



# Education

## The Key to Women's Progress

*Nothing is more critical to the advancement and empowerment of women around the world than education. And the advancement of women, in turn is essential to the well-being and progress of every society and the global community.*



*First Lady Laura Bush, right, meets with Pakistan's Federal Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education Zobaida Jalal February 7, 2002, at the White House in Washington.*

When a society educates a girl, it gives her the tools she will need to support herself and her family. For a woman, a single year of education usually correlates with an increased income of 10 to 20 percent during her working years.

Societies have learned that educating girls leads to better health in their adult years—not only for themselves, but for their families as well. Every year of schooling for a woman increases the chances that her babies will survive and live healthier lives.

For the United States, education for girls and women is more than a smart investment; it is a deeply held responsibility. As First Lady Laura Bush, a former teacher and librarian who is the honorary ambassador for UNESCO's (U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) Decade of Literacy, has said: "Education is vital to developing nations and generations. Education expands eager young minds; a lack of education stifles and limits them. The chance to learn and to read and write should never be only the privilege of a few, royalty or the rich, the first-born or sons. Education is the birthright of every human being—all the world's sons and all the world's daughters."

### A Global Effort

The challenge of making education the birthright of all remains daunting: UNESCO estimates that more than 100 million children between the ages of six and 11 do not go to school at all, and that another 150 million will drop out before they finish their basic education. The United States strongly supports UNESCO's Education for All initiative and its work helping to rebuild education infrastructure in post-conflict societies. UNESCO's focus on education was an important element in President Bush's decision to rejoin the organization in 2003.

Through its sizeable public and private contributions to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United States also supports UNICEF's education activities, which reach millions of girls. For instance, some of UNICEF's advocacy publications have focused on girls' education; and UNICEF has used sports to promote girls' enrollment in schools in priority countries. It helped three million children enroll in school in Afghanistan after the war. It is working to do the same for an estimated one million children in Liberia, where it has distributed over 7,000 school supply kits and is training 20,000 teachers. And in Iraq, UNICEF delivered hundreds of school-in-a-box kits to schools; it assisted in the holding of final exams after the war; and it has been involved in rehabilitating schools.

The U.S. government also is focusing its efforts on women and children in some of the poorest and neediest places in the world. It has established its Equity in the Classroom program, for example, in Bangladesh, Benin, El Salvador, Haiti, Morocco, Peru, South Africa, and Uganda, among other countries. Administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), this program offers training and technical support in countries where educating girls is an explicit national priority.

In 2002, President Bush announced a five-year African Education Initiative to help countries in that region improve primary school education through training of teachers, providing textbooks and other learning materials, supporting community involvement, and offering scholarships for girls. U.S. embassies in some 30 African countries identified the girls who were eligible for these scholarships. In addition, more than 20,000 teachers have received training in countries such as Benin, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and South Africa.

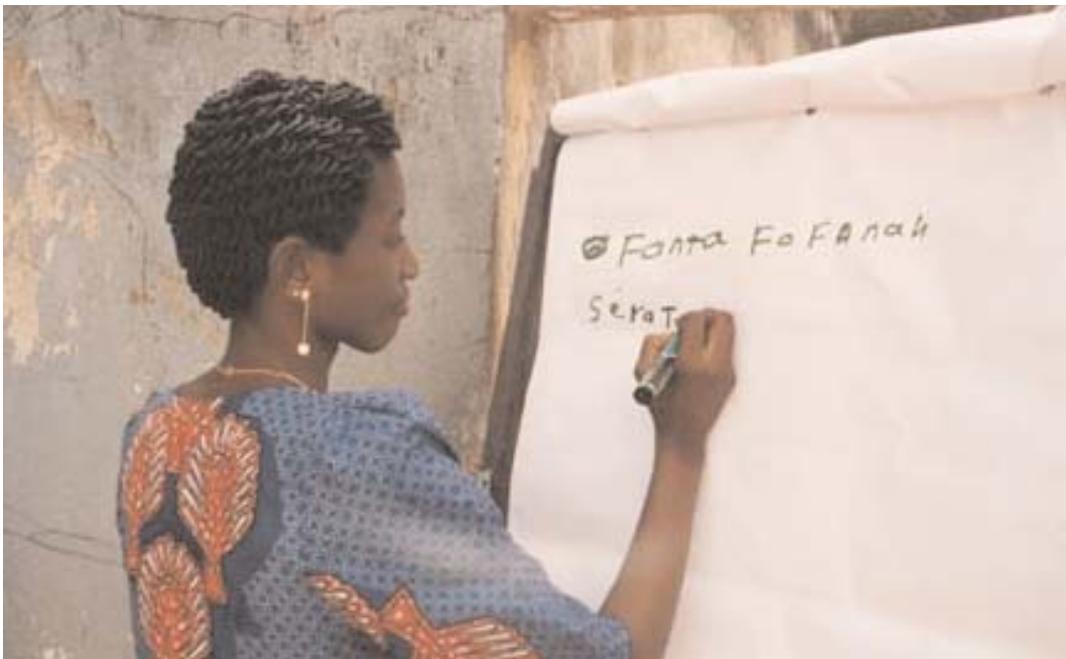
USAID works to promote basic education for girls as well as boys in order to reduce poverty, improve health and social well-being, and sustain economic growth. USAID's education programs for girls target both the lack of access and the poor quality of resources that hinder girls' participation and achievement in school. This approach involves using multiple strategies to address barriers to girls' education, including engaging influential citizens and organizations within the public and private sectors to support girls' education and promoting "girl-friendly" national education policies.

For example, a USAID program to raise the acceptance of girls in the classroom in the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, and Peru has had a number of successes, among them the establishment of a universal law for the enrollment of girls under 18 in Peru, and the awarding of 47,500 scholarships through the private sector to girls in Guatemala. A thousand handbooks, funded by USAID and distributed in Ghana, give guidance to school administrators and communities on ways to encourage girls to attend and stay in school. In El Salvador, 15 issues of a children's two-page insert in the country's leading daily newspaper were devoted to promoting education for girls.

To ensure girls and boys go to school rather than sweatshops, in 2002 the United States established the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. Its funds help millions of malnourished girls and boys stay in school where they will receive nutritious meals. In low-income countries, the program provides for donations of U.S. agricultural products, as well as financial and technical assistance for school food and maternal and child nutrition projects. U.S. implementing partners for McGovern-Dole include governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the World Food Program (WFP) through its global Food for Education initiative. The WFP initiative promotes nonformal education for women and adolescent girls and provides a monthly oil ration to teachers. In 2004, McGovern-Dole funding for the WFP was used in Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Kenya, Mozambique, and Malawi.

As these examples show, agencies across the U.S. government offer a variety of programs that contribute to its goal of expanding educational opportunities for all people at every level and of all ages and backgrounds throughout the world. It is a global effort that, in the words of Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Patricia Harrison,

*Top, class at the Agadir Secondary Girls' School in Baghdad's Saydiya neighborhood. Center left, Florence Nabyar, left, of Afghanistan and Arezo Kohistani. The two were part of a group that received scholarships to study at American universities in 2003. Center middle, a student from the Hala Bint Khuwaylid Secondary Girls' School in Baghdad with her USAID-funded school bag. Center right, Iraqi Fulbright scholars on February 2, 2004, applaud remarks by State Department Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs Patricia Harrison. Bottom, a USAID literacy program participant in Sierra Leone.*



helps to “promote respect and increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.”

### Advancing Literacy and Training Opportunities

In opening the UNESCO Decade of Literacy in February 2003, First Lady Laura Bush said, “For people throughout the world, literacy is freedom—the freedom to learn independently and continuously throughout life. Literacy gives us the freedom to transform ourselves from who we are to who we want to become.”

Literacy training is an important element in many of the Bush administration’s global education initiatives. For instance, the Broader Middle East and North Africa initiative that promotes political, economic, and social reform in the region has launched a literacy initiative that will focus on meeting the region’s own goal of halving illiteracy by 2015, with a primary emphasis on women and girls.

For example, in Morocco, U.S. involvement in the Rural Girls’ Educational Support Committee provides financial aid to some 100 girls over three years so they can complete middle school.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) also supports literacy education for women in Morocco and in Yemen. MEPI is a critical element in President Bush’s “forward strategy for freedom” for that region. It is designed to support economic, political, and educational reform and to champion opportunity for all people, including women and youth. It links Arab, U.S., and other private-sector businesses, NGOs, other civil society elements, and governments to help develop innovative policies and programs that will support Middle East reform. The United States considers the educational advancement of women in the region critical to long-term peace and development.

### Education for Empowerment

MEPI, through its Partners in Participation program, also provides a means for women in the Arab world to increase their knowledge and skills related to political and civic life and democracy. With MEPI support, two U.S.-based NGOs, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, conducted the first of a series of workshops

and training courses in running democratic election campaigns. More than 50 women from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen participated in the workshop in Doha in February 2004. A second program in Tunis in July brought together 60 women who serve as public officials and civil society leaders from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia.

MEPI is involved in economics and business training for women as well. In August 2004, for example, 42 participants visited the United States in the first-ever Business Internship Program for Young Middle Eastern Women. They attended a month-long academic program at Duke University in North Carolina and Emory University in Georgia, followed by three-month internships at Fortune 500 corporations, law firms, and small- and medium-size companies.

Since 2003, the Middle East Entrepreneur Training (MEET) program, which promotes entrepreneurship and small business development in the Middle East and North Africa, has trained women entrepreneurs and small-business owners. One of its programs focused on senior executives with at least 10 years of business experience. A second, three-week series of training programs focused on younger, emerging business executives and entrepreneurs.

Examples of the MEPI partnerships between governments and nongovernmental organizations, both in the region and in the United States, include training in many fields:

*Legal Training.* The Department of State’s International Visitor Program sponsors hundreds of women for legal training in the United States. These programs address issues such as NGO management, the role of legislators, the judiciary, and rule of law.

*Political Training.* In Kuwait, the U.S.-Middle East Democracy Fund sponsors a program that trains women activists to develop strategies for obtaining political rights for women, including the right to vote and run for elected office.

*Media Training.* Internews, an international NGO, offered lessons in accuracy, objectivity, and balanced reporting to 40 Jordanian, Palestinian, and Saudi journalists. MEPI also is planning to work with Arab female news commentators and journalists to develop a program aimed at highlighting women’s empowerment in the Arab media. The program may include documentary film production and other types of media training.

*Reform Efforts.* In October 2004, the State Department announced additional funding for economic, political, and educational reform and women's empowerment in Jordan, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, the West Bank, and Gaza. Many of these initiatives propose creative linkages among NGOs, government ministries, civil society, and businesses.

### Afghanistan and Iraq

Afghanistan and Iraq provide vibrant examples of why the United States invests so much in advancing education for women and girls.

First Lady Laura Bush finds Afghanistan's story particularly compelling: "One of the most inspiring places to witness the transformation education brings is in Afghanistan. Three years ago, 92 percent of girls did not attend school because the Taliban did not allow women to be educated. Today, nearly four million children are in school—including more than a million girls. Young girls, who were not allowed to leave their homes unless they were accompanied by a male relative, who had to hide their books under their burkas, are now studying math and science."

By summer 2004, the United States had implemented more than 200 programs, including in education and training, that directly benefited Afghan women.

The U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, which encourages public-private partnerships between U.S. and Afghan women, has established a Women's Teacher Training Institute in Kabul in cooperation with USAID. The institute will work with the Afghan Literacy Initiative to help teach basic literacy to rural Afghan women. In addition, every six months some 30 Afghan women travel to the United States for teacher training—and they return to Afghanistan to train other teachers.

The council has sponsored training as well in a variety of fields: training for women journalists and new entrepreneurs, literacy education for women in the traditional carpet industry, and training in health care for rural communities. Two noteworthy initiatives in the latter area are the training of midwives and distribution of the "talking" *Afghan Health Book*, an interactive publication with basic information that is being distributed in Dari and Pashto across rural Afghanistan (see p. 22 for details).

A key to education is connection, not only between students and teachers, but among the larger

global community of colleagues, experts, mentors, and professionals. In Afghanistan, the United States has conducted a diverse set of educational and cultural exchanges directed at women. For example, after restoration of the Fulbright exchange program to Afghanistan, four women were among the first 20 Afghan university students selected for the academic year 2004-2005.

By 2004, girls in Iraq were enrolling in the more than 2,300 renovated schools. Their rates of attendance are now higher than they were in the pre-war period. Partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi universities have been strengthened as well, and six women were among the first class of 25 Iraqi Fulbright students.

The United States is supporting the creation of nine Women's Centers in Baghdad and 11 regional Women's Centers throughout the country. At these centers, and through the U.S.-Iraq Women's Network of public-private partnerships and the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative, women can gain knowledge and expertise in entrepreneurship, democracy education, political organization, leadership, and coalition building. The \$10 million Democracy Initiative, for example, will "help women become full and vibrant partners in Iraq's developing democracy," said U.S. Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky. "We will give them the tools to manage their own associations and to build coalitions with others, and we will provide the information and experience they need to run for office, lobby for fair treatment, and lead Iraq's emerging institutions."

Education for women is not just for the betterment of women alone. Even more so than in the past, education will be the key that builds tolerance and understanding and that unlocks futures of freedom, opportunity, and prosperity for all the peoples of the world. As then Secretary of State Colin Powell said in October 2004, in recognition of International Education Week: "Meeting the 21st century challenges that confront all countries requires an unprecedented degree of understanding and cooperation among nations and among leaders in every field."

For additional information on these and other U.S. government programs, see <http://www.state.gov>, <http://exchanges.state.gov/>, <http://mepi.state.gov/c10175.htm>, <http://usawc.state.gov/index.htm>, and <http://www.usaid.gov/>.



## Providing an Education to African Girls

*Enabling women in the developing world to participate fully in creating a modern society is crucial to development efforts: No nation can expect to reach its full social and economic potential if half its population is marginalized.*

A key first step in such empowerment of women is extending equal educational opportunities to them, beginning with their early years.

The nations of sub-Saharan Africa confront many obstacles in educating women, including financial constraints, competing demands for girls' and women's time, unsafe school settings, a lack of trained teachers—all exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic that has depleted the teaching and school administrative force in many countries on the continent.

At present, girls constitute more than 50 percent of the 44 million children in Africa who do not have access to primary education. In many countries, the costs associated with schooling are an insurmountable barrier for poor families trying to obtain an education for their children. In African nations that have made primary schooling free for every child, the sudden influx of millions of new students has often led to individual class sizes of 100 or more pupils, severely straining resources and challenging the ability of teachers to offer quality instruction.

The U.S. government's foreign assistance programs support a multitude of innovative projects to improve education in Africa and help nations in the region overcome the challenges to strengthening and expanding their school systems, including increased enrollment of girls.

A cornerstone of such U.S. efforts is the Africa Education Initiative, launched in 2002 with an initial budget of \$15 million and an additional commitment of \$185 million over the subsequent four years through

2006. The initiative is managed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), working closely to carry out its programs with host-country ministries of education and institutions of higher education, the private sector, and local and international nongovernmental organizations.

The principal objective of the initiative is to increase both the access to quality basic education and the number of teachers, especially at the primary school level. At this time, only 63 percent of all children in sub-Saharan Africa attend primary school, and only 21 percent go on to secondary school.

To help improve this situation, the U.S. goal is to provide 250,000 scholarships for African girls, train more than 160,000 new teachers, and offer in-service training for more than 260,000 current teachers. So far, as a result of the initiative, more than 110,000 teachers have upgraded their skills through in-service training and approximately 20,000 teachers have received pre-service training; moreover, 770,000 textbooks and other materials were distributed to students, and 17,000 girls benefited from scholarships.

Another key component of the initiative is creating partnerships between six historically black U.S. colleges and universities and six educational institutions in African nations to supply 4.5 million textbooks to schoolchildren in Africa.

In addition to the Africa Education Initiative, USAID manages bilateral education programs in 16 African countries. In the West African nation of Benin, for example, education is a centerpiece of U.S. foreign assistance efforts. USAID has worked closely

with its ministry of education to design and implement a new primary school curriculum focusing on active learning and relying less on rote memorization of facts. This curriculum is now being implemented nationwide. Community and government sensitization to the importance of girls' education helped increase their gross school enrollment numbers.

Further north in the Sahel region, USAID supports the government of Mali's goal of offering all children universal access to primary education by the year 2015. At present, only 44 percent of girls in that country are in school, and women constitute just 20 percent of the teaching corps. Among the educational projects the United States funds in Mali is one addressing girls' specific learning needs, including making school environments more amenable to the demands on girls' time (supporting community schools that are located closer to their homes with more flexible school schedules, for example) and ensuring that the curriculum is gender sensitive.

Angola, in southwest Africa, offers a case study of the daunting developmental challenges many African countries confront, as well as the incremental, grass-roots improvements that U.S. foreign assistance supports.

Gaining independence in 1975 after 400 years of Portuguese colonial rule, Angola endured a quarter-century of nearly continuous warfare between the two major political factions. Although Angola is rich in natural resources, such as oil, diamonds, and fisheries, the conflict left the country's economy in shambles and as many as 1.5 million dead. Social indicators, including infant mortality and life expectancy, are among the worst in the world, and the country faces a challenge in educating the population to avoid the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Literacy rates in Angola also are low, with only 42 percent of the population aged 15 or older able to read. The statistics for Angolan women are even worse: Only 28 percent can read and write.



As part of the U.S. government's foreign assistance program in Angola, a USAID-funded women's center has helped provide basic literacy skills to women who otherwise have no access to formal education. Created as much to help strengthen the development of civil society and the understanding of human rights as to improve literacy, the center provides a clean, comfortable learning environment for volunteer teachers and their students.

Inaugurated in July 2003, the center currently enrolls 1,200 women, with an eventual capacity twice that size. To date, more than 1,500 Angolan women have received basic literacy training there. The center plans to supplement these literacy classes with training in small-business management—an important

feature, given that most of these women earn their livelihood working as street vendors or operating microbusinesses.

The Angolan Ministry of Education has committed itself to providing additional teachers, books, and educational materials for this women's center. It has also cited the institution as an excellent example of the initiatives needed to

foster literacy as well as the values of civil society, both of which, in turn, help underpin Angola's economic and political development.

Investing in girls' education does, in fact, confer significant economic and social returns on developing nations in Africa and elsewhere. Studies show that girls who complete even primary education become adults who are healthier and more economically productive and politically active; and they raise children who stay in school longer.

For more information on this U.S. initiative, see: <http://www.state.gov/p/af/> and [http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan\\_africa/](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/).



*Above, women are the majority of students in the adult literacy programs funded by USAID throughout Angola.*

## Bringing Literacy to Moroccan Women

*“My name is Fatima Amad. I am 28 years old, and come from Asslim, an oasis in Morocco’s Draa valley. Because I was a girl, I did not receive ‘my right to an education’; I did not go to school.*”

... A girl who would go to school would offend the traditions and customs. Only boys could aspire to receive education in schools. We, the girls, had to follow the normal and burdensome destiny of any girl; we were outside history and would continue to be so.”

Fatima’s complaint is illustrative of the challenges developing nations confront in providing a quality education to their poorer and/or rural citizens, women in particular. Almost 70 percent of Morocco’s rural population is illiterate, with the rate for rural women reaching 83 percent.

Although Morocco’s government allocates a quarter of its annual budget to education, the return on this investment is low. An estimated 85 to 90 percent of rural students who do receive an education drop out after primary school.

The weakness of the country’s basic education system in teaching fundamental skills and literacy contributes to the chronic shortage of well-trained technical workers, which, in turn, retards economic growth.

In response to this situation, the United States has made educational improvement a major element of its foreign assistance programming in Morocco. One special focus has been increasing basic educational opportunities for girls and women in rural areas, where the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) works in partnership with a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization (NGO), Helen Keller International.

Although best known for its work in 25 nations around the world combating blindness and eye diseases, Helen Keller International has found that this effort requires a concomitant fight against underlying social causes, such as poverty, illiteracy, and inequality. For that reason, the organization expanded its activities in Morocco to offer basic literacy training to 20,000 women in the south of Morocco, including a literacy and sustainable-development program targeting poor women in the desert province of Zagora.

The program has made all the difference for women like Fatima. “I have started to learn reading and writing, but at my age, I had to overcome the ‘lost time,’ and I learned quickly,” she says. “Now, and God be praised, I can read, write, and count. I understand the meaning of words such as poverty, malnutrition,

the right to an education, the right to equity, and the right to work. I still continue, every day, to discover the meaning of new words that are important in our lives.”

The program in Zağora has been so successful that it is now expanding to other educationally underserved areas elsewhere in Morocco, such as the provinces of Tangier and Al Haouz in the north section of the country. In Al Haouz province alone, the program aims to provide basic literacy training to 2,000 women in eight rural villages.

Teaching fundamental reading, writing, and mathematics skills is the cornerstone upon which the partners in the project intend further upward advancement in the status of rural women in Morocco. All told, the program aims to reach more than 25,000 women, in the process also helping to reduce the prevalence of malnutrition and eye disease.

Follow-on literacy projects will assist these women’s integration into the country’s social and economic fabric by providing the women with the skills they need to create their own microenterprises, so they earn a regular income. Among the 43 such business ventures already in operation are agricultural projects, livestock breeding, restaurants, inns, and pre-school centers. These employment opportunities also are helping to reduce poverty levels and promote sustainable development in Morocco’s rural regions.

This women’s literacy program is not the only U.S.-funded initiative focused on improving educational opportunities and achievement among Moroccan girls and women.

USAID—through funding from the Middle East Partnership Initiative, launched by the Bush administration in December 2002—provides \$2 million to support, for example, U.S. and Moroccan NGOs engaged in literacy training. These efforts will

assist the Moroccan government’s Secretariat for Literacy in developing new literacy-training materials and instructing trainers how to use this material.

The literacy training is part of a larger, recently launched \$40-million USAID education program that focuses on basic education and workforce training. The program also will put an emphasis on girls and women.

Similarly, the Moroccan government’s Rural Girls Educational Support Committee has received more than \$500,000 to provide financial support for 100 Moroccan girls for three years so that they may finish middle school. The committee and local NGOs also are opening five homes to provide these girls with

safe and culturally acceptable living quarters near their school.

“I now want to thank all those who have contributed to the success of this marvelous program,” Fatima says. “They have made it possible for words—their meaning and what they hide—to belong to everyone.”

She adds, “These words have allowed us to enter the path of dignity.”

For more on the Middle East Partnership Initiative, see <http://www.mepi.state.gov/>, and for more information on U.S. Agency for International Development grants, see <http://www.usaid.gov/>.



*Above, one of the Moroccan participants in Helen Keller International’s training proudly displays the radio station that is part of the basic education and sustainable development effort.*

# Ensuring Healthy Lives for Women

*When women are healthy, their children, families, and communities thrive. It is also the case that countries that assure the health and human rights of women have stronger economies.*



*Afghan women look over one of the lessons in the interactive Afghan Family Health Book.*

In many areas of the world, however, women suffer from poor nutrition and are at greater risk of diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and complications related to pregnancy and delivery—problems that even could result in death.

In many of these cases, the international community knows what is needed to reduce these afflictions. What is often lacking is the will and, in many cases, adequate health-care resources for women.

This is why the United States is at the vanguard of developing global, bilateral, and local health-related programs and remedies and why it supports international efforts to improve the health of women around the world, as well.

The U.S. government is, for example, the world's largest bilateral contributor of reproductive health assistance, including for voluntary family planning and maternal health care. The U.S. government provides approximately \$500 million annually for such programs. All of this funding directly serves women in more than 60 countries.

An example of the Bush administration's bilateral focus on improving women's health globally is a half-million-dollar initiative announced by First Lady Laura Bush in May 2004 for women in Hungary. A grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will enable the American International Health Alliance, a nongovernmental organization, to develop community-based programs that address their particular needs.

U.S. programs are helping to respond to critical problems such as the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women and maternal mortality, concerns shared by the United Nations.

## Protecting Women and Girls From HIV/AIDS

Helping women and girls build lives free of the shadow of HIV/AIDS is a U.S. government priority, and America is using a variety of strategies in more than 100 countries.

Women and girls disproportionately bear the burden of HIV/AIDS, especially in the countries hardest hit by the epidemic. In sub-Saharan Africa, they account for about 57 percent of infections. In some of the worst-affected countries in Southern Africa, as many as 20 percent of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are infected, compared with 5 percent of boys the same age. In most developing nations, the infection rate of women is growing at a faster pace than that of men.

Practices that increase women and girls' vulnerability to HIV infection include older men having sex with young women and girls; sexual exploitation of women and children through rape, domestic violence, prostitution, and sex trafficking; social norms that accept and encourage multiple partners for men; and women's lack of economic power, social status, and legal rights.

Women and girls bear the brunt of the social impact of the epidemic. Women are primary caretakers in families and communities, tending to the sick and to children orphaned by the disease. They are the most likely to lose jobs, income, and schooling to fulfill family and community obligations.

Women are major contributors to the agricultural workforce. They often feed their families and add to their families' meager income. When a woman's health deteriorates, or when she must provide care to other family and community members, essential community needs such as food security suffer.

The United States committed almost \$1.2 billion in bilateral assistance for the control of HIV/AIDS in 2003 alone. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, created in 2003, the United States has committed \$15 billion over five years to fight the AIDS pandemic. The Emergency Plan provides prevention, treatment, and care for those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS in more than 100 nations, with a special focus on 15 of the hardest hit countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia.

The United States has donated \$20 million for AIDS relief in India under the President's Emergency Plan. Some of this funding supported the recent open-

ing in Tamil Nadu of India's first family counseling center for HIV/AIDS patients. It provides clients and their families with pre- and post-test counseling and help with prevention of virus transmission, disease progression, treatment options, health management, and nutrition.

The U.S. government is reviewing the first data on the numbers of people treated under the Emergency Plan and verifying initial numbers, which are very encouraging. They indicate that the United States is on track to meet President Bush's expectations to treat more than 200,000 people in the 15 focus nations by June 2005, the end of the first year of full implementation of the plan's treatment programs.

The Bush administration also recently announced \$100 million in new grants for abstinence-focused programs in these 15 key countries. These grants, overseen by USAID, will mobilize faith-based and community-based organizations to help adolescents and young adults avoid behaviors that put them at increased risk for HIV/AIDS infection. The President's Emergency Plan strives to strengthen the support systems that can intervene to help women and children. It works on locally designed behavior-change strategies, with direct tailored messages to appropriate groups, parents, and others who can help educate girls about what they need to do. The specific strategies in the plan that address gender issues related to the HIV/AIDS pandemic include:

- \* Helping communities confront cultural norms and practices that increase the vulnerability of women to HIV, such as multiple sexual partners and cross-generational and transactional sex;
- \* Addressing gender-based violence and the sexual coercion and exploitation of women and girls, often by targeting interventions and highly successful relationship programs to men and boys;
- \* Providing technical assistance and training to build palliative-care capacity, thus relieving the burden on women as the primary home-based caregivers;
- \* Strengthening the ability of families and communities to care for orphans and vulnerable children; and
- \* Ensuring the importance of women's inheritance rights.

The U.S. government provides significant resources to combat HIV/AIDS through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, a partnership established in 2001 among governments,

civil society, the private sector, and affected communities. The fund has attracted \$5.5 billion in financing through 2008. The United States is its largest contributor, having pledged more than \$2 billion to the fund through 2008, 35 percent of all pledges to date. It already has disbursed almost \$1 billion.

The Global Fund supports a number of projects that benefit women directly. One of these is the Kenya Network of Women with AIDS (KENWA). KENWA offers counseling, home-based care, and psychosocial support to 2,300 women and some 700 orphans in deprived slum areas of Nairobi. Its six centers serve as information, dissemination, and walk-in counseling centers.

### Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS

Adding to the tragedy of HIV/AIDS infection is the potential for an HIV-positive mother to transmit the HIV virus to her newborn child. In the absence of any treatment, an estimated 15 to 30 percent of infected mothers transmit HIV during pregnancy and delivery, and 10 to 20 percent through breast milk.

In launching the U.S. International Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative in 2002, President Bush said: "One of our best opportunities for progress against AIDS lies in preventing mothers from passing on the HIV virus to their children. Worldwide, close to 2,000 babies are infected with HIV every day, during pregnancy, birth, or through breastfeeding. Most of those infected will die before their fifth birthday."

This initiative, now integrated within the President's Emergency Plan, seeks to increase the availability of HIV preventive care, including short-term anti-retroviral prophylaxis for pregnant women, and to improve access to basic health counseling and care to as many pregnant women as possible. To date, the U.S. government has set aside more than \$288 million for mother-to-child transmission programs.

Under the President's Emergency Plan, for instance, the U.S. government is providing drug therapy and intensive counseling to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In fact, in just 18 months, U.S.-funded partners have trained nearly 15,000 health workers and built capacity at over 900 different health-care sites to enhance care of pregnant women and prevent mother-to-child transmission. The services include: HIV counseling and testing, short-course

antiretroviral treatment during delivery and early infancy, support for safe infant-feeding practices, and voluntary family-planning counseling and referral.

In each of the host countries, a ministry of health or equivalent governmental structure, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including faith-based organizations, and international agencies partner with U.S. agencies, such as the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator in the State Department, USAID, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to implement these services and ensure they adhere to a set of agreed-upon standards for implementation. Because communities play a vital role in implementing preventive programs as well, the U.S. government provides funds to community organizations—in Rwanda, for example—that reach out to pregnant women to increase awareness and acceptance of practices and programs that can prevent the transmission of HIV to newborns.

### Reducing Childbirth Complications and Maternal Mortality

Complications during pregnancy and birth claim the lives of more than half a million women each year. Ninety-eight percent of these deaths occur in developing countries. Maternal morbidity and mortality affect not only women, but also their families, the lives of young children, and society in general. The complications contribute significantly to chronic underdevelopment in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Nearly 15 percent of pregnancies in these regions involve potentially life-threatening complications, including postpartum hemorrhage, infection, obstructed labor, and complications of unsafe abortions. Giving women access to skilled birth attendants and timely and appropriate obstetric care can avert serious long-term problems and death.

This is why USAID focuses its maternal mortality prevention strategies on strengthening the capacity

*Top, a mother cradles her child in a hospital in India. Center left, children in the village of La Union, Lempira, Honduras, receive food donated by the World Food Program. The United States is the largest donor to the WFP. Center right, an Iraqi doctor in Baghdad prepares to vaccinate a girl to protect her from several diseases, including measles. Bottom, midwives conduct a training session for health workers in a rural health center in Thee Kone village, Myanmar.*



of hospitals and health centers to provide basic, essential obstetric care. This approach has been successful in reducing maternal mortality in a number of USAID-assisted countries. In Egypt, for example, maternal mortality has declined by 52 percent since the late 1980s. Maternal mortality rates have decreased by 41 percent in Honduras and by 30 percent in Guatemala.

Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, however, have had little or no reduction in the problem in the last decade, and recent demographic and health surveys indicate that maternal deaths have increased in Zimbabwe and Malawi. To help combat this problem, USAID is developing programs to increase positive birth outcomes and improve maternal health in the region.

In Afghanistan, which has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, the United States is helping to develop programs to address the problem. It has launched a \$5-million initiative to provide accelerated instruction in health care and literacy for women and girls. The training, which has taken place in women's centers supported by the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, focuses on provinces with the highest maternal mortality rates. The first class of village midwives from Jalalabad graduated in April 2004, having completed an 18-month program. This pilot curriculum is being replicated across Afghanistan. The council's Health Advisory Committee, which includes leaders in government, medicine, and other health-related fields, matches public- and private-sector resources for Afghan women and children with health needs on the ground.

In August 2004, then U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tommy Thompson told the advisory committee about an innovative U.S. maternal and child health-training program for physicians and other specialists at Rabia Balkhi Women's Hospital in Kabul. Since 2003, successive teams of U.S. physicians, nurse-midwives, hospital administrators, and other medical experts have rotated through that hospital. These "faculty consultants" helped open a fully functional pediatric nursery and a 24-hour



emergency room to conduct classes, lectures, workshops, and teaching rounds to improve the staff's clinical skills. HHS also implemented initiatives to improve hospital management and administration, including basic systems for infection control, inventory control, personnel, and pharmacy management.

As a result of these efforts, there has been an 80- to 90-percent decline in maternal deaths at the Rabia Balkhi

Hospital. In April 2004, the hospital celebrated its first-ever month with no maternal deaths.

HHS also sponsored a public-private partnership to develop and disseminate health information to women in Afghanistan, where illiteracy rates for women run as high as 80 percent. An interactive *Afghan Family Health Book* was developed to provide more than 350 messages on good health practices, including pregnancy, breastfeeding, childhood immunization, water-boiling, and nutrition, in the Dari and Pashto languages.

The 42-page book conveys its lessons in an accessible, story-like format that allows the user to interact with recorded conversations. Information is provided through pictures, audio, and—for those who read—text. Since the spoken and written word are presented together, the book helps encourage reading—one step toward increasing literacy in Afghanistan—in addition to giving vital health information.

### Helping Victims of Obstetric Fistula

One complication of pregnancy that disproportionately affects young and poor women, predominantly in Africa and the Indian subcontinent, is obstetric fistula, an abnormal tearing that can occur during obstructed and prolonged labor or from repeated violent rape. It is estimated that some two million women suffer from fistula and that, each year, another 50,000 to 100,000 are affected, most under age 20. Untreated, women with fistula are often deserted by their husbands and cut off from family, friends, and daily activities. The loss of the baby adds to the mother's physical and emotional stress.

This condition is treatable, but most women in the developing world often lack access to the required medical care and the funds to pay for treatment. To help fistula victims, USAID supports programs in surgical repair and rehabilitation at institutions in Uganda and Bangladesh. USAID also has supported regional advocacy in East, Central, and Southern Africa, and is considering supporting advocacy efforts in West Africa in the coming year.

The U.S. Congress earmarked \$9 million for Fiscal Year 2005 to support USAID's fistula prevention and treatment programs. These include the use of skilled birth attendants; access to emergency obstetric care for medical and surgical interventions—including Caesarean section—to treat prolonged/obstructed labor and thereby prevent fistula; and helping very young women avoid early pregnancy through education and family planning.

### Improving Nutrition for Healthier Mothers and Children

Women's nutrition and survival often are a neglected focus of development programs. Improving women's nutrition is critical because women are income earners, food producers, and family caretakers. Therefore, good nutrition for women results in enormous social, economic, health, and development benefits. Furthermore, women's health and nutrition before, during, and after pregnancy have an impact on child survival and development.

The United States is dedicated to working with U.N. organizations such as the World Food Program (WFP) to improve nutrition for women and men. Between January and mid-December 2004, the United States, the largest donor to the WFP, contributed over \$826 million to its efforts. These funds are used all over the world, including in Afghanistan, where WFP operations have shifted from an emergency response to rehabilitation and recovery. With U.S. assistance, the WFP conducts a "Food for Education" program that, among other things, includes nonformal education for women and adolescent girls, and the provision of a monthly oil ration to teachers nationwide.

The United States has donated an annual average of \$250 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) over the past three years. With these funds, UNICEF has provided, among other

programs, 1,000 metric tons of high protein biscuits and 100 tons of therapeutic milk to children and pregnant and lactating women in Iraq to boost their nutrition levels. Working closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and American NGOs like the Rotary Club, UNICEF also helps to immunize millions of girls and boys around the world. In 2004 alone, UNICEF immunized 80 million African children against polio.

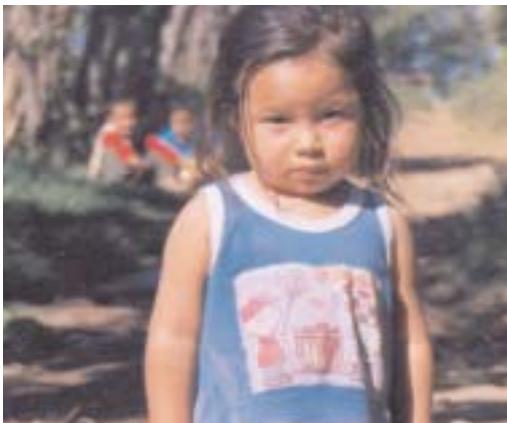
USAID funds many projects that address nutritional needs in the developing world. In May 2004, USAID made a \$2.5-million contribution to the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), a nonprofit organization that targets nutritional needs in the developing world. This contribution funds the addition of vitamins and minerals to common staples such as wheat flour, sugar, and cooking oil, a practice industrialized nations have followed for more than 80 years. Increasing the intake of vitamins and minerals can reduce the severity of infectious diseases, such as malaria, measles, and diarrhea; reduce illnesses and complications during pregnancy; and foster positive birth outcomes.

The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program is an example of U.S. efforts to ensure children in impoverished nations do not go hungry. Children, many of them girls who otherwise might not attend school, receive nutritious meals while at school. The Bush administration has requested \$75 million in 2005 for this program to help nourish both the bodies and the minds of many of the world's poorest children.

For additional information on any of these programs and issues, see: U.S. State Department at <http://www.state.gov/> and <http://www.state.gov/s/gac>, USAID at <http://www.usaid.gov/>, HHS at <http://www.hhs.gov/>, and its Office of Global Health Affairs at <http://www.globalhealth.gov/>.



*Facing page, a woman and her baby at one of the feeding centers supported by U.S. funds in Ethiopia.*



*Top, an Afghān nurse checks the blood pressure of a pregnant woman at the Malalay Maternity Hospital in Kabul. Center left, Zulma Lisenia Ramos reached the desired weight for her age through USAID's Integrated Nutrition Care Program in El Salvador. Center right, then U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Ralph Boyce meets one of the women and children in a U.S.-supported feeding center in West Timor. Bottom left, one of the young patients in a cholera treatment center for displaced persons in Liberia. Bottom right, Well Family Clinic owner-manager Nazarina Daria, right, with her clients.*

## Healthier Babies

### Filipino Clinics Deliver a Better Way

*The U.S. commitment to women's health and well-being is visible in its hundreds of programs that provide immunization services, nutrition, and maternal and neonatal care for millions of women and their families around the world.*

To decrease the risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth, these programs emphasize improving the quality of and the access to health services, and equipping birth attendants with the knowledge, skills, and clinic instruments needed to deliver lifesaving care.

Thanks to U.S. funding in the Philippines, for instance, more than 2,040 midwives are making family planning and maternal and child health services accessible to more lower- and middle-income families around the country. What's more, these midwives are earning a good income for their efforts at franchised, private-sector family planning, maternal, and child-care wellness centers throughout the country.

One of these trained midwife entrepreneurs is Nazarina "Baby" Daria, who, with her husband, had operated the small grocery store they owned in Talisay, a small city in Central Philippines. She was looking for an opportunity to apply her special skills and talents to earn enough income to help raise a family. However, Nazarina did not know what opportunities existed in her husband's hometown or how to get started. Her cousin told her about a U.S. government-funded program that could help: the Well Family Midwife Clinics. With her husband's encouragement, she applied to the program.

The wellness centers for the Philippines came about in 1997, when the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched these projects in partnership with eight nongovernmental organizations. Midwives selected for the network receive basic clinic equipment and instruments, rigorous training that includes business management, and marketing assistance to promote the clinics and the services they

offer. The renovated or newly constructed clinics are sustainable, because the midwives invest their own capital, increasing their stake in the clinics' success. This sustainability is further ensured through a support organization that will provide ongoing supervision and guidance to the midwives long after USAID ends its assistance.

Through this program, family planning counseling, pre-natal and post-natal supervision, and the delivery of babies in a warm, caring environment have become attractive, accessible, and affordable to more middle- and lower-income families in the Philippines. USAID reports that the clinics serve an estimated population of 1.6 million women of reproductive age nationwide, including families in some Muslim-populated municipalities of Mindanao.

With the USAID program's support, Nazarina converted the family store into a cheerful lying-in health facility, complete with a waiting room, an office, examining and delivery rooms, and a recovery room furnished with twin beds, a tiny crib, a kitchenette, and even a TV.

On call 24 hours a day, Nazarina loves her work of delivering 10 to 18 babies per month. "I never thought I could reach like this," says Nazarina, referring to her success as a businesswoman, "because I was just a plain housewife and storeowner. I always say, 'Thank you, USAID,' for giving the midwife a chance."

For more information on the Well Family Midwife Clinics, see: <http://www.wfmc.com.ph/>.



## One Child at a Time

### Reducing HIV/AIDS Transmission

*Nearly 800,000 babies per year—  
most of them in sub-Saharan Africa  
—are infected with HIV as a result  
of transmission of the virus from the  
pregnant mother to the child.*

Under President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the United States is at the forefront of the effort to reach HIV-infected pregnant women so they can give birth to healthy babies. This is a story about how U.S. HIV/AIDS initiatives are bringing hope to mothers in many countries, one child at a time.

Alzira Mendes went to the Munhava health center in her neighborhood in Mozambique's port city of Beira, Sofala Province, in February 2003 for her first antenatal checkup. A 29-year-old widow, Alzira was six months pregnant with her third child. During her visit, the nurses gave her information about HIV and about a new program to prevent mother-to-child transmission funded by the President's Emergency Plan.

Alzira had heard about HIV before this visit. In 2002, overall HIV prevalence in Sofala was 26.5 percent, but prevalence among pregnant women in Beira ranged from 27 to 35 percent. Alzira had never been tested, but she decided it was important for her and her baby to know about her HIV status.

While nurse Flora Vaz administered an HIV test, she counseled Alzira about HIV transmission and prevention, as well as the significance of the test. Nurse Vaz had Alzira's results within a short time.

Upon hearing that she was HIV positive, Alzira's first thought was for her baby: Could she prevent the transmission of HIV to her child? Nurse Vaz explained that to reduce the chance of transmitting HIV to a child, an HIV-positive woman should come to the maternity ward upon the onset of labor and take nevirapine, a drug used in HIV treatment. The baby also should receive one dose of nevirapine within 72 hours of birth. Alzira was happy to enter this program to improve the health of her baby. Nurse Vaz also referred Alzira to the Day Hospital at the Beira Central Hospital, which provides care and treatment for HIV-positive persons.

During the final three months of her pregnancy, Alzira participated in a "Positive Mothers" group at the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission program in Munhava. During weekly meetings, Alzira and other HIV-positive pregnant women received information and counseling about breastfeeding, nutrition, preparing food for their babies, social constraints when living with HIV, stigma, and the importance of having their partners tested. Participants also received food supplements.

Alzira's labor began early one morning in May. She immediately went to the health center, received nevirapine, and after a few hours of labor, delivered a baby boy, Apolinário, who also received nevirapine. Following the birth, Alzira and Apolinário joined a support group for HIV-positive mothers and their babies at the health center, and they continued to go to the Day Hospital for care.

When Apolinário was five months old, the Day Hospital tested him to determine his HIV status. Alzira cried with joy and relief when she heard that his test was negative, indicating that her baby was not likely to be infected. Since Alzira is not breastfeeding, there is an excellent chance that her son still will prove HIV-negative at 18 months, when a conclusive antibody test can be done. Because of her participation in the preventive program, Alzira has given her son an opportunity for a life without HIV.

This program to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS is fully integrated within the Mozambican public health services and operated with U.S. funds by Health Alliance International, a U.S.-based nonprofit private organization. With Emergency Plan funding in 2004, Health Alliance International was able to offer the program's integrated prevention services at 12 new sites, treating about 3,000 pregnant women and their newborns to avert new HIV infections, and providing new hope and services to thousands of Mozambicans like Alzira and Apolinário.

The United States launched its International Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative in 2002, to make programs like the one above possible. The initiative, now integrated into the President's Emergency



Plan, targets countries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, committing \$500 million over five years. The current target countries include Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, and Zambia, as well as participants in a Caribbean regional program. The Emergency Plan is already changing the shape of HIV prevention and treatment in these countries. Since its inception, country capacity has improved significantly; countries that were previously thought to be incapable of providing antiretroviral treatment are scaling up programs that reach pregnant women, their children, and families.

In Mozambique—a country twice the size of the state of California, with a population of 18 million and a national HIV prevalence rate of 13.6 percent—U.S. funding in 2004 has enabled the Ministry of Health to roll out preventive services in 31 new sites, reaching 64,000 additional pregnant women and treating about 4,200 HIV-positive women and their newborns.

For more information on this U.S. initiative, see <http://www.state.gov/s/gac>.



*Above, a mother and her daughter receive care through an antenatal clinic supported by the U.S. government in Mozambique.*

# Promoting Economic Opportunities for Women

*The United States is strongly committed to increasing economic opportunities for women, both at home and throughout the world.*



*A businesswoman from Guinea proudly displays her certificate, after concluding an Internet and computer-basics course sponsored by USAID and the African Businesswomen's Information Service.*

Giving women a greater stake in the economy of their countries enables them to contribute to their own financial stability and to that of their families in whatever ways they choose. As President Bush also noted on International Women's Day in 2004, "The economic empowerment of women is one effective way to improve lives and to protect [human] rights."

The United States reaffirmed its belief in the importance of economic opportunities for women at the recent G-8 Forum for the Future, where the world's leading developed countries declared that "equality between men and women as well as access to global information technology are crucial to modernization and prosperity. A better-educated workforce is a key to active participation in a globalized world. We will focus our efforts to reduce illiteracy and increase access to education, especially for girls and women."

U.S. programs designed to advance women's economic empowerment are numerous. They range from programs that promote women's legal rights to rural programs that support sustainable development and resource management. Taken together, these programs demonstrate America's desire to enable women, no matter where they live, to have a chance to be free of poverty. U.S. initiatives also include funding for microenterprises and access to financial and business services, promoting economic freedom policies bilaterally and multilaterally, and encouraging developing countries to institute reforms that will unleash greater economic opportunities for women and men alike.

One important policy reform would give women an equal right to own and inherit property and gain access to credit and business information. "In too many countries, women have little hope of advancing economically because they lack the basic right to own, and therefore sell, property," says Ambassador Ellen

Sauerbrey, U.S. representative to the U. N. Commission on the Status of Women. “That’s why we continue to promote property and inheritance rights for women in every forum.”

### Microenterprise: Key Engine of Growth for Women

A particularly promising global phenomenon for women is the development of microenterprises—businesses of fewer than 10 employees (often including paid and unpaid family members) that are owned and operated by someone who is poor. These very small businesses are becoming key engines of economic development, spurring income growth and poverty reduction throughout the developing world.

In many countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, the microenterprise sector constitutes the majority of the working population. No less than 90 percent of workers in India owe their livelihood to this segment of the economy, for example, while in Mexico microenterprises are responsible for 64 percent of total employment and 32 percent of gross domestic product.

The U.N. Commission on the Private Sector and Development, headed by Canada’s Prime Minister Paul Martin and Mexico’s former president, Ernesto Zedillo, found that small enterprises are an enormous and underutilized resource for economic development and poverty eradication, particularly for women. Its 2004 report, *Unleashing Entrepreneurship: Making Business Work for the Poor*, notes:

“In many developing countries, women constitute the majority of microentrepreneurs in the informal economy and a significant percentage of the formal sector. Many of them are illiterate and live in poor rural communities. And setting up their own enterprises—generally microenterprises—is usually the only possibility for them to be employed and earn an income on their own. In Latin America and the Caribbean between 25 percent and 35 percent of formal sector microenterprises and small and medium enterprises are owned and operated by women. In the Philippines women own 44 percent of the microenterprises, more than 80 percent in rural areas. In Zimbabwe women run the majority of microenterprises and small enterprises (67 percent), while enterprises run by men tend to provide proportionally more of the household income and have more employees.”

At present, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) works in partnership with

more than 500 American, host country, and international organizations around the world to spur the creation and development of microenterprises and deliver financial services to the poor. These programs focus on:

- \* Encouraging the reform of laws, regulations, and policies to facilitate entrepreneurship and the creation and operation of microenterprises, as well as expanding access to financial services for the poor;
- \* Helping local providers of business development services (such as training, product design, input sourcing, and marketing) to extend and tailor their offerings to poorer clients who run microenterprises; and
- \* Supporting microfinance institutions, so that diverse financial services, including credit, can be offered to those normally excluded from formal financial markets.

Research shows that most of the people who seek financing for extremely small businesses are women. Moreover, they are proving to be resourceful business owners and highly motivated savers who repay their loans at a higher rate than men.

The United States sees microenterprises as a foundation for building stable communities. Since 2000, average annual USAID funding for microenterprises has exceeded \$150 million. In the 2002 fiscal year, this support reached more than 3.7 million microentrepreneurs, more than two-thirds of whom were women. In 2003, the United States signed into law the Microenterprise Enhancement Act, reaffirming the commitment of Congress to microenterprise development and directing USAID to fund microenterprise activities at the level of \$200 million for Fiscal Year 2004.

Expanding the benefits of microfinance to even more women will mean providing services to the extremely poor, creating safe and accessible savings instruments, using microfinance groups as a vehicle to address the HIV/AIDS crisis, and promoting women as leaders in the microfinance industry. U.S. programs established during the past four years contribute to these efforts.

### Helping Women Farmers to Succeed

The vast majority of poor women live in rural areas where the primary income and livelihood sources are subsistence and smallholder agriculture. In developing countries, women comprise approximately 67

percent of the agricultural labor force. They are responsible for more than 55 percent of food production around the globe, although they own less than 2 percent of all land. Their productivity in agriculture is often hindered by a lack of access to formal and informal education, and difficulty in getting credit and increasing their capacity to produce.

Despite these challenges, success stories from USAID assistance in agriculture abound. In Ethiopia, USAID recently reported that women were almost 60 percent of all the farmers reached by USAID's agriculture research and extension services. Of the 1,600 households adopting better technologies, including fuel-efficient stoves, improved crop varieties, bee-keeping, and soil and water conservation, over 70 percent were headed by women, as were the nearly 80 percent of the 3,600 households that began new businesses. More than 10 savings and credit cooperatives were providing financial services to more than 2,000 households, the majority headed by women.

### Supporting Women Entrepreneurs Worldwide

Another U.S. effort to promote women's economic opportunities is the Bush administration's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Its funding, for example, enables women from the Middle East and North Africa to participate in entrepreneurial training in the United States. Another program provides three-month internships at leading companies in the United States so that young women from the region can acquire management and business skills. A microcredit program for Palestinian women has provided 34,000 loans—worth more than \$13 million—to help build sustainable businesses.

In Africa, the United States has supported women's business development under the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act and the Growth Through Engendering Enterprise program. The United States provides grants and technical assistance

and sponsors workshops on international trade opportunities, the Internet, and financial management.

U.S.-funded programs for women also exist in East Asia and the Pacific. Women can receive training in organizational and management techniques in Cambodia and East Timor; economic self-sufficiency in Tibetan areas of China; and increased access to credit in the Philippines and Indonesia. In addition, the United States works with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum to ensure women's interests are taken into account in its policies and projects.

In Europe, U.S. support for public-private partnerships helps provide job training for Roma women in Bulgaria, microcredit for women farmers in Azerbaijan, and networking opportunities for women in Russia's Far East. The United States recently helped to launch a Women Business Leaders Summit in the region, bringing women business

owners from Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine together with their American counterparts to share their experiences.

Programs that the United States has developed for the newly freed and politically empowered women in Afghanistan and Iraq are also worth mentioning. They include:

- \* A \$5-million microenterprise initiative and other microcredit projects to help women start their own businesses and become self-sufficient;
- \* \$3.2 million for the Afghan Conservation Corps, which employs several hundred women to help rehabilitate the environment;
- \* \$750,000 for business and entrepreneurship training;
- \* \$530,000 for the Arzu Carpet Initiative;
- \* \$130,000 for handcraft training; and
- \* Fellowships to train women as managers and technicians in agribusiness.

In Iraq, the United States is providing \$10 million in grants for the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative, a wide-ranging project that includes training in entrepreneurship and business management. At



the Women's Centers opening up in Al-Kut, Diwaniyah, Karbala, Al-Hillah, Mosul, Najaf, and Sulaimaniya, women can, among other activities, attend computer and literacy classes, receive business and job-skills training and legal services, and obtain microcredit loans.

Women also need access to the advances in information and communications technology that are transforming economies around the world. Through USAID, for instance, the U.S. government assists women business owners and managers in eight countries in West Africa by offering training in computer use and access to the Internet for critical business-information and market opportunities. Ambassador Sauerbrey notes, "Cyber cafes and other strategies all over the world that enable women and girls to have access to this vital technology give them a window to the world, increasing their aspirations and leading them to demand more and faster social change."

### MCA: A New Compact for Global Development

In December 2002, President Bush unveiled a new compact for global development called the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). This groundbreaking initiative aims to encourage policy reform, reduce poverty, and promote economic growth on a large scale. Through this new development assistance program, the United States will increase its levels of core assistance by 50 percent over the next three years, to reach an annual increase of \$5 billion by Fiscal Year 2006. This funding will especially help women, who are disproportionately among the poor.

The key to receiving this increased assistance lies in meeting the MCA eligibility criteria. Countries must show policy performance in three areas: ruling justly, investing in their citizens, and encouraging economic freedom—because, as the international community has recognized, development assistance is most effective in countries with a sound policy framework.

A country's protection of human rights and civil liberties, including for women, also matters. For example, girls' primary school completion rates are part of the selection criteria for Fiscal Year 2005, in recognition that investments in women and girls can be a significant contributor to poverty reduction and economic growth.

Morocco provides a good example. In announcing Morocco as a new entry to the Millennium Challenge Account in 2004, then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell pointed out that, among its other political, economic, and educational reforms, Morocco had passed "a family law that revolutionizes the rights of women."

MCA funds will supplement the current levels of assistance provided by USAID to developing countries like Morocco to help them open their economies to greater trade and foreign investment. As U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs

E. Anthony Wayne pointed out, research shows that "where good governance and sound economic policies are in place, each dollar of foreign aid invested attracts two dollars of private investment."

As all these examples show, the range of U.S. initiatives to empower women economically is varied and broad. In all its trade and economic policies and agreements, the United States remains deeply committed to helping women around the world gain the skills and knowledge they need to become engines of economic growth as entrepreneurs and business leaders.

For additional information on any of these programs and issues, please visit the U.S. Department of State at <http://www.state.gov/>; USAID at <http://www.usaid.gov/>; and the Millennium Challenge Corporation at <http://www.mcc.gov/>.



*Facing page, Consuelo Arispe de Arias is a market seller in Cochabamba, Bolivia, who has benefited from microenterprise loans. Above, Eunice Aho Agbo with the product of the Batik & Dye Center for school dropouts and teenage mothers in Ghana.*



*Top, Fatouma Djibril Issifou from Benin with her vegetable-selling business. Center left, small loans provided by a U.S.-funded NGO allowed women in the village of Sambaya-Nafa, Guinea, to develop small businesses. Center middle, a farmer from Mozambique shows off her cashew crop. Center right, Agustina Urbina of El Salvador applied for a USAID-assisted loan to purchase a permanent location for her growing business selling a local candy, “hojaldre.” Bottom, Bangladeshi women beneficiaries of the aquatic ecosystem management project (MACH).*

## Water for the Poor in Bangladesh

*A major U.S. international initiative to improve sustainable development, such as the management of water resources, illustrates how many U.S.-funded projects in developing countries are designed*

to provide women with the skills and credit needed to improve their own lives and those of their families.

The Water for the Poor Initiative, announced by the Bush administration at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, calls for a U.S. investment of \$970 million over three years, from 2003 to 2005, to increase access to clean water and sanitation services, improve water management, and increase the productivity of water for millions around the globe. One project under this initiative already has made a big difference for hundreds of women in Bangladesh, where the needs of an expanding population have placed severe stress on the country's natural resources.

Bangladesh's population is heavily dependent on freshwater fish, which represent 50 percent of all the animal protein consumed in that country. This precious wetlands resource, however, is believed to have declined by 40 percent or more in the past two decades. The decline in this source of food is adversely affecting the nutrition of all Bangladeshis, as well as the income and employment of 13 million or more rural poor.

The \$12-million Management of Aquatic Ecosystems Through Community Husbandry (MACH) project in Bangladesh, sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has as its goal enhancing the productivity of fisheries and farmlands to ensure a sustainable supply of food to the poor.

But what is most interesting about MACH is that, from the start, it has emphasized a role for women, both as beneficiaries and as staff running the project. For instance, MACH is providing 25 percent of all large-enterprise loans to female members of its Resource User Groups. As a result, more than 1,500 women are directly benefiting and contributing in improving the management of Bangladesh's wetland resources.

Through MACH, women are receiving credit, skills-development training, awareness-raising sessions on socioeconomic and life issues, leadership training, and adult literacy training. All these women, as well as their families, are benefiting from the increased fish yields brought about through their own conservation efforts.

In 2004, MACH included an additional 240 women in Resource User Groups, and some of these were incorporated into the resource planning organizations that are increasing fish yields through conservation. USAID expects that, by the end of the second round of this project, an additional 350 women in Bangladesh will receive leadership training, while another 620 women will have received adult literacy training.

For more on this project, see <http://www.usaid.gov/bd/index.html>.



## Microenterprise

### Lifting Women Out of Poverty

*Some of the biggest gains in the status of women come from the smallest of projects.*

*Such is the case with microenterprises, generally defined as an informally organized business with 10 or fewer employees that*

is owned and operated by someone who is poor. Throughout the developing world, U.S. support for these ventures has markedly improved the lives of ordinary women, often lifting them out of poverty.

Take Fatouma Dijbril Issifou, who runs a vegetable stall in the town of Parakou in the West African nation of Benin. After receiving two loans totaling just \$390, slightly more than Benin's per capita gross national income, from a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), she was able to increase her profit margin by buying vegetables in bulk at a lower cost. Those profits have transformed a previous hand-to-mouth struggle for daily existence into a life that now enables her to buy sufficient food for her three children and pay for their education.

In the Russian town of Otradniy, Tatyana Panova has used her two loans from the Foundation for International Community Assistance to purchase the foodstuffs necessary to expand her home-based business selling baked goods and full lunches to local cafes. Thanks to the profits earned through this thriving enterprise, Panova's daughter is now able to attend technical college.

And in Mexico, Baulia Parra Pruneda leveraged a microenterprise loan of \$150, about 2.5 percent of Mexico's per capita gross national income, to purchase the supplies necessary to launch a sewing business. Through the proceeds she earns selling more than 100 articles of clothing a week, she now is the breadwinner for her family of eight and has installed running water and a second floor in her home in the city of Monterrey.

Such success stories are a reason why, for the past three decades, the U.S. government, through its foreign assistance programs that support NGOs and host-country institutions, has placed a high priority on this brand of bottom-up development efforts encouraging entrepreneurship that help the poor—particularly poor women—help themselves.

In June 2003, Congress reaffirmed its commitment to microenterprise development by passing legislation that directed the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to fund microenterprise activities at the level of \$200 million for Fiscal Year 2004. These activities benefit women in particular: In 2003, women constituted two-thirds of loan clients of USAID-supported microfinance institutions.

Reflecting on the growth of U.S. support for microenterprise, Emmy Simmons, USAID's assistant administrator for economic growth, agriculture, and trade, says: "Microenterprises account for a substantial share of total employment and gross domestic product, and they contribute significantly to the alleviation of poverty. They are often the chief economic defense of the most vulnerable households. As the predominant source of income and employment for hundreds of millions of people worldwide, the microenterprise sector's influence on individuals, households, and national economies is clear and profound."

Women are disproportionately represented in the microenterprise sector. Across the developing world, the representation of women employed in the informal economy ranges from 58 percent in Latin America to 84 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these women do home-based work or street vending—they

constitute 10 to 25 percent of the nonagricultural workforce in developing countries.

USAID takes a holistic approach to microenterprise development, employing a wide range of strategies to help poor entrepreneurs overcome the many obstacles that can hinder their success. Traditionally, this has meant working with microfinance institutions to broaden access to credit. This is especially important for women, who for legal or economic reasons often find themselves unable to obtain credit and the other financial services they need to start or expand their businesses. In recent years, USAID has expanded its efforts to address the obstacles entrepreneurs face by working with industry associations and private-sector firms to develop markets for the nonfinancial business services that small entrepreneurs need.

An example from Azerbaijan illustrates how USAID's work in business development services has benefited women with home-based animal husbandry enterprises. In Azerbaijan, cultural norms dictate that women should not have one-on-one contact with men outside their families. As most veterinarians are male, women have enjoyed only very limited access to veterinary services. With USAID support, Mercy Corps works to assist women's groups that join together to purchase veterinary services on a periodic basis. Veterinarians now view these women-run, home-based businesses as a financially viable market. Consequently, they are designing more demand-driven services and payment methods that are better suited for this clientele.

Ethiopia is another good example. It is struggling to overcome significant challenges to development—including a recent war, food shortages, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Women in particular face mounting obstacles, with a 42-year life expectancy at birth and limited access to education, health, and other social services.

In response, a USAID-supported urban agricultural program is showing HIV/AIDS-affected women in selected urban areas how to create low-cost, nonlabor-intensive urban gardens. With appropriate training, organization, and market linkages, these urban gardens supply food for the owners' households as well as a significant surplus that offer the women and their families income for medical, educational, and other expenses.

Returns on labor and capital for urban gardening are very high: Households spend at most one hour a day on the larger gardens, and even less time on smaller ones. The combination of available food with medi-

um- and long-term income opportunities diminishes the health and economic effects of HIV/AIDS and will have a positive impact on reducing infections in the country.

The Peace Corps also promotes the development of community-based small business and microenterprise projects in virtually all the countries where it is active. One Peace Corps volunteer in Togo, for example, initiated a revolving credit group for women at the beginning of her tour of duty in 2000. That credit group continues to grow and thrive, with enough funds now on hand for its members to open bank accounts, reinvest in their businesses, and pay for the education of their children.

U.S. government support for microenterprise development continues to evolve in new directions as different challenges arise. Constatá, a microfinance institution in Georgia, received grants from USAID and other donors totaling just over \$4 million to help its work with internally displaced women, who typically were supporting families on their own. Since its inception in 1998, Constatá has served more than 20,000 disadvantaged microentrepreneurs.

In a recent survey of some of Constatá's 15,000 active clients, three-quarters of those surveyed reported increases in income—and 92 percent of them attributed that increase to the credit access that has enabled them to tap into new economic opportunities.

Such microenterprise initiatives, multiplied countless times, are spurring grassroots development and advancing the status of poor women throughout the world, be they a vegetable seller in Benin, a cook in Russia, or a tailor in Mexico.

U.S. Congressman Christopher Smith, one of the sponsors of the Microenterprise Results and Accountability Act of 2004, believes that microenterprise loans, which average \$134, help women in the world's poorer nations overcome the many additional obstacles they confront because of their sex by giving them the means to support themselves and break the cycle of poverty and discrimination.

"While these awards may seem small in our society, the microcredit loans are key to the individuals who received them," Smith observed in an article he wrote for *Microenterprise: Laying the Foundation for Economic Development* (February 2004). "These loans can make the difference by helping them develop their own business, build their own homes, and care for themselves."



# Championing Women's Political Empowerment

*U.S. efforts to increase women's political participation have spurred dramatic progress in countries all over the world.*



*First Lady Laura Bush, second from right, and then National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, right, meet with the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council on July 16, 2003, in the White House.*

From Afghanistan, where millions of women voted for the first time ever in historic presidential elections, to Rwanda, where the elected parliament now has a higher percentage of women than in any other country, women are gaining a greater role in political decision-making.

The United States has led the way in advancing women's political empowerment worldwide through a wide range of programs and initiatives, including a landmark resolution on "Women and Political Participation" which it introduced at the United Nations. The resolution, which aims to promote and protect the rights of women to participate in political processes, was adopted by the full U.N. General Assembly with 110 cosponsoring nations in December 2003. (See [www.state.gov/g/wi/rls/rep/28497.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/wi/rls/rep/28497.htm).)

The origin of the resolution is found in the aspirations of women, explained Ambassador Ellen Sauerbrey, the U.S. representative to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. When Sauerbrey spoke with women around the world, invariably they said: "We can't solve our problems unless we have a voice and are active in the political system. But we don't know how to run for office, we don't know how to raise money, we don't know how to change our system to gain more opportunities." It was a perfect issue for the United States to champion at the Commission on the Status of Women.

"The United States is very committed to equality for all," Sauerbrey stressed. "The participation of women strengthens democracy. You cannot have a true democracy unless all members can take part in decision-making and government policy."

Like earlier documents, dating back to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 2003 U.N. General Assembly resolution is rooted in the

philosophy of equality and the right of all people to participate in their government. It seeks to promote and protect women's equal right to associate freely, express their views publicly, debate politics openly, petition their government, and otherwise participate in the democratic process.

The resolution urges governments to ensure equal access by women to education, and to eliminate laws and regulations that discriminate against women. It calls on governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and civil society groups to encourage political parties to seek qualified women candidates and to support initiatives aimed at expanding women's political, management, and leadership skills. It recommends encouraging the media to provide fair and balanced coverage of male and female candidates, and to address issues that have a particular impact on women.

The resolution goes further than previous efforts by setting out a blueprint of practical measures that all levels of government and all entities of civil society can take to facilitate women's full political participation.

Nations that are struggling to move ahead look to U.N. resolutions for guidance, Sauerbrey said. The fact that some NGOs and governments indicate they are making the resolution more useful for women by translating it into their national languages is particularly noteworthy.

### U.S. Programs Make Women Equal Partners

The United States is funding programs in every region of the world to support the activities and goals outlined in this resolution. Such programs aim to make women an equal partner in advocacy, voting, leading, legislating, and governing.

Most of the programs originate at the U.S. State Department or the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). According to Charlotte Ponticelli, the State Department's senior coordinator for international women's issues, "We try to identify women's critical needs on the ground and then identify potential resources here—not just money, but skills and talents—that could be tied into meeting those needs." U.S. embassies are crucial in that process, she said. She stressed that the U.S. government seeks to match needs with resources through program funding,

and through the creation of partnerships among governments and with the private sector and nongovernmental organizations.

Many women's empowerment programs are implemented overseas in conjunction with local agencies or local organizations. Others, most notably the State Department's International Visitor Program, bring potential women leaders to the United States to meet experts and see how the U.S. political system operates in person.

In Ponticelli's opinion, women need education most. "Wherever we go, women tell us that the main thing for them is acquiring the knowledge, the skills, the education, to enable them to participate," she said. The U.S. government funds numerous basic literacy programs all over the world. But this is only part of what is needed, she explained. In many less-developed countries and emerging democracies, U.S. programs are designed to provide women with an education in democracy.

### Gender Equality in Iraq

What is democracy? How does it work? What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens? Even educated women ask these questions when they have not had access to the free flow of information, Ponticelli said. "A young woman science and public health professor from the University of Baghdad recently turned to me and said, 'Only after Saddam did I even learn that women have rights in the world.'"

With strong U.S. backing, Iraq's Governing Council adopted a new basic law providing equal rights for all Iraqis without regard to gender. The Governing Council, the Interim Cabinet, and the Baghdad City Council all include women members. The United States has allocated nearly half a billion dollars to support democracy-building programs in Iraq, including projects specifically designed to help women. It has supported the creation of 11 regional Women's Centers and nine Women's Centers in Baghdad that offer education and training in computers, job skills, health care, and legal services. These centers will be open to all women and run by women who are democratically elected.

Then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell announced two additional initiatives on International Women's Day in 2004. Among other activities, the \$10-million Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative provides education and training in leadership, political

skills, coalition building, organizational management, the media, and entrepreneurship to help women gain control of their lives through social, legal, and political action, and job opportunities. The U.S.-Iraqi Women's Network, a public-private partnership, links women's organizations in both countries to match private-sector resources with women's needs on the ground in Iraq.

U.S.-sponsored workshops for Iraqi women are reshaping the country's political landscape. The first symposium for women in municipal government was held in the Babil Governorate in July 2004; it focused on strategies for fostering women's participation in upcoming elections. Iraq's Minister of State for Women's Affairs Narmin Orthman hosted a similar national meeting in Baghdad in November 2004. She noted proudly during a visit to Washington, D.C., in October 2004 that under Saddam there was only one government-controlled "women's organization"; now there are 500 vocal and independent women's organizations. Women are organizing at all levels, she said.

### Opening Opportunities for Women Leaders in the Arab World

Another flagship U.S. endeavor for women is President Bush's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Launched in December 2002, it offers a framework and funding for U.S. partnering with the region's governments and private sector and civil society actors to expand political, economic, and educational opportunities, with an emphasis on women.

The first program implemented under MEPI auspices was the "Women as Political Leaders" International Visitor Program. It brought 49 women officials, aspiring candidates, civil society leaders, activists, and journalists to the United States to look at grassroots U.S. electoral politics and to learn political campaign skills. Participants were surprised at the prominent role of the media and fundraising in campaign efforts.

The United States has provided \$500,000 to two nongovernmental organizations headquartered in Washington, D.C.—the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI)—to create campaign schools for current and future women leaders in the Arab world. Women are taught, for example, how to run a campaign, manage a

democratic organization, and monitor elections. The first course, held in Doha, Qatar, in February 2004, trained more than 50 women from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen; the second was held in Tunisia in July 2004 for 60 women from Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria.

The U.S. Department of State also gives human rights grants to strengthen women's advocacy. A project in Jordan focuses, for example, on training, research, collective action, and contact with decision-makers at all levels of government. Other U.S. training programs in Jordan provide instruction on campaign techniques, parliamentary procedures, and public relations. A project in the Maghreb promotes women's rights advocacy in the entire region through workshops for human rights lawyers, networking initiatives, and an education program for illiterate and semi-literate women to develop grassroots awareness and mobilization.

### Dramatic Progress for Afghan Women

In Afghanistan, political progress for women has been swift and dramatic. Women were engaged in the constitutional process as members of the Constitutional Drafting Committee and the Constitutional Review Commission. Women comprised a record-breaking 20 percent of the delegates to the Constitutional Loya Jirga, the traditional grand council used in Afghanistan for deciding important political matters. And women greatly mobilized to vote in the October 2004 presidential elections.

The United States had provided more than \$84 million to support the Afghan election process, including discussion groups that helped educate women on the importance of voting and political participation. Other programs trained women candidates and helped political parties to mobilize female members.

The U.S.-Afghan Women's Council links the U.S. and Afghan governments, private sectors, and NGOs in practical projects benefiting women. In one notable example, the organization is providing more than \$1 million for literacy and job training programs in 17 new Women's Resource Centers across Afghanistan. At one of these in Kabul, the State Department's Charlotte Ponticelli recalled seeing a poster showing women signing up to vote, registering to vote, and dropping a ballot in a voting box. As it



*Top, presidential candidate Massouda Jalal speaks to supporters in Kabul a month before Afghanistan's first presidential vote. She was named minister of women's affairs by the winner, President Hamid Karzai. Center left, a woman in training for election monitors in Arbil, Iraq. Center right, the United States and other donors have helped establish more than 1,050 Afghan Community Development Councils, whose members are elected by secret ballot—as seen here. Bottom, a USAID-sponsored political study mission brought 15 prominent Guinean women politicians to Senegal in 2002 to discuss advancing women in politics and civil society.*

turned out, hundreds of Afghan women gathered at that center and walked miles to the nearest voters' registration site. "They showed their voice through action," Ponticelli stressed. "This is the impact these programs can have."

### Initiatives for Women in All Regions

Other regions of the world are just as important to the U.S. effort to enhance women's political participation.

In post-conflict societies from the former Yugoslavia to Colombia and the Congo, the United States has led efforts to ensure that women are included as planners, implementers, and beneficiaries of international recovery and reconstruction work.

The United States supports initiatives all over the world that help women acquire the skills necessary to become fully engaged in the political process. In Africa, for example, the United States has partnered with nongovernmental organizations to provide women leadership training. Before the 2002 elections in Senegal, the National Democratic Institute trained more than 2,000 women in campaign techniques and skills. The result was impressive: 93 percent of the more than 1,500 women elected to local government positions in the elections had participated in this comprehensive training.

The ALVA Consortium, a nongovernmental organization based in Washington, D.C., is training many women in Africa in political skills and how to run for office. With \$400,000 from the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund, this group's program is reaching women in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Angola. In both Kenya and Rwanda, several women who received ALVA Consortium training have been elected to public office or appointed to high-level government positions.

In Liberia, Nigeria, Sudan, and the self-declared Republic of Somaliland, the International Republican Institute is using a U.S. grant of \$897,000 to partner with Muslim civic groups to increase Muslim women's participation in politics and civil society and to increase men's support for and cooperation with women's activism. This project addresses what Sauerbrey has called one of the greatest impediments to women's empowerment—the cultural barrier of differing expectations for women and men.

Sauerbrey, who led a team of trainers in Cote

d'Ivoire in August 2004 that included Josie Bass, president of ALVA Consortium, and Odette Nyiramilimo, a Rwandan senator and founder of the Coalition of Rwandan Women Leaders, has seen firsthand the impact of U.S. training initiatives. "The workshops in Cote d'Ivoire," Sauerbrey explained, have "inspired a number of women to run for political office. We watched them develop the



skills and confidence to do it."

The State Department and USAID have also provided funding to nongovernmental organizations in Eastern Europe and Eurasia to conduct women's leadership programs. Prior to the 2000 elections in Serbia, for example, the National Democratic Institute used U.S. funding to provide training, polling, and strategic consultations to attract women voters. In Russia, the International Republican Institute is coordinating a women's parliamentary program that offers training in parliamentary procedures, how to draft legislation, and how to run a communication program. The U.S. Embassy in Belarus works with women's organizations to promote democracy and political activism.

In Kazakhstan, the State Department is funding a \$400,000 project to increase the participation of provincial women in the electoral process, public policy formation, and the oversight of local legislative bodies. In Tajikistan, NDI is managing a \$500,000 project to develop a women's political network to train women candidates and increase women's participation in the country's political development.

In South Asia, NDI is coordinating a \$716,000 project to improve the capacity of women to campaign for elected office in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and to develop a sustainable local capacity to train women party members and elected officials.

In Vietnam, the U.S. government provided a \$100,000 grant to an NGO, the Spangenberg Group, for a program to support the drafting of that country's first gender-equality law, establish a women's rights task force, and strengthen strategic litigation. The 40 members of Vietnam's Gender Equity Law Drafting Committee—from the Vietnam Women's Union, National Assembly, Supreme Court, Ministry of Justice, and several other ministries—attended the first training seminar in November 2004. The committee is mandated by the government of Vietnam to produce a draft gender-equality law by March 2005.

In Cambodia, with U.S. funding, the National Democratic Institute sponsored "Women in Politics" conferences, while the local NGO Women for Prosperity held public forums with female candidates on "Women in Politics," which were taped and later broadcast on local radio stations. The Girl Guides Association built the capacity of girls and young women for self-reliance, self-esteem, and assistance to their own communities, including training focused on rights and responsibilities, democracy, and the culture of peace. The "Mobilized to Develop Women" program used U.S. funds to provide advocacy and legal-rights training to disadvantaged women, with emphasis on women's rights and rule of law.

The United States continues its unwavering support of the Burmese democracy movement and its leader, Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest. Through the National Endowment for Democracy, the United States has long supported the development of strong women's organizations that have become important contributors to the democracy promotion and advocacy activities of the Burmese democracy movement. Ethnic minority women's groups are now represented by an umbrella organization, for instance. By working together, organization members hope to build solidarity and understanding among women of all nationalities in Burma. They have programs in capacity building, peace and reconciliation, and combating violence against women. They also play a large advocacy role as a platform for the women of Burma to push for political change in Burma and work for gender equality in society. They conduct women's rights and empower-

ment-training workshops, and they advocate for women's rights at the United Nations and in other international fora.

Some U.S.-funded programs also focus on the role that the media can play in fostering women's political participation or in obstructing it. Media coverage of women who step forward in places where they are normally not politically active gives them credibility. But, as Ambassador Sauerbrey said, "If the media dismiss women as irrelevant to the process, that is a huge barrier."

The Women's Media Center of Cambodia, run entirely by women, strives to improve women's status by promoting socially conscious television, video, and radio programs. With financial and technical assistance from USAID through The Asia Foundation, the center began operating as an independent NGO in 1995. The center owns and operates Radio WMC, the only nonpartisan, noncommercial radio station in the country. The station's slogan is "Women Using the Media to Promote Social Change." During the 1998 and 2003 national elections, the center played a critical role in educating the public about the importance of women's participation as candidates and voters.

U.S.-funded programs like these can help women become more active citizens and overcome barriers to their full political participation and empowerment. "The momentum cannot be stopped," said Ponticelli. All over the world, "women are taking heart from progress."

For more information on these and other U.S. programs, see: <http://www.state.gov/g/wi/>, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls>, [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/wid/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/), <http://www.wia.usda.gov/>, and <http://mepi.state.gov/>.



*Facing page, Ambassador Ellen Sauerbrey with women from five Georgian cities gathered in Mtskheta on May 31, 2003, for U.S.-funded Urban Institute training in how to find solutions to the pressing urban problems they faced.*

## Training Women Leaders to Make a Difference

*Many women around the world dream of running for office so they can help build a better future, not only for themselves and their families, but for all the people in their village, their region, and their country.*

Too often, these dreams are dashed by laws or cultural norms that bar or restrict women from politics and government service, or by the lack of the education and skills successful candidates possess.

Thanks to the United States, however, scores of these women—women like Nancy Elizabeth Henríquez, a Miskito Indian from the northern town of Sandy Bay, Nicaragua—have made their wishes come true. Henríquez was elected mayor for the municipality of Bilwi on November 7, 2004, using skills she acquired in municipal candidate-training sessions offered by the International Republican Institute (IRI), with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy.

“These training sessions have empowered women by giving the indigenous communities the confidence to express their rights and opinions, and ensure leadership positions in local governance,” Henríquez says of the program conducted by IRI.

A nonpartisan, nonprofit U.S. organization dedicated to advancing democracy worldwide, IRI sends expert volunteer trainers, elected officials, and staff to more than 50 countries around the world to teach men and women how to build strong and lasting democracies in their countries. IRI, like its counterpart, the National Democratic Institute, is one of many nongovernmental (NGO) and private organizations that draw on generous U.S. funding to offer a multitude of programs and specialized training to encourage women’s political participation and strengthen their leadership qualities. In 2004, IRI received more than \$25.5 million from USAID and more than \$7.8 million from the National Endowment for Democracy for all its programs.

Henríquez, a council member for eight years for the Atlantic Autonomous Region, Nicaragua’s poorest area, attended IRI training in June 2004. Other participants in her group, women between the ages of 17 and 70, included representatives from AMIKA and KIMAT, the two main local indigenous women’s associations in Puerto Cabezas and Waspan; representatives from the local branch of the Autonomous Region Human Rights Office; and members of the Association of Judges, an NGO that fights abuse against women.

Henríquez believes IRI's training is important for her and the other participants because "it enables us to analyze the laws that affect the citizens of the Atlantic Coast. Additionally, the seminars provide us with the necessary judicial skills to fight toward greater political space."

From Argentina to Burma and from Belarus to Nigeria, the United States and partners like NDI and IRI can point to similar achievements for women who, like Henríquez, seek an active role in public life.

For instance, following the passage of Indonesia's new election law in 2003, IRI carried out elections training in preparation for the 2004 parliamentary and presidential elections. Included in these programs were sessions for 400 women candidates and activists in East Java and Yogyakarta, in addition to a national conference, "Electing Women to Office in the 2004 Election," and three elections-related training seminars in three Indonesian provinces and the capital, Jakarta.

Once Indonesia's general elections took place in April 2004, the institute moved quickly to provide training to political party groups, especially women activists who sought office in 2004 at the provincial and national levels.

In Moldova, 177 women, including elected officials, from all its regions attended three IRI women's political training seminars held in 2004 for the Social Liberal Party, the Christian Democratic People's Party, and the Our Moldova Alliance Party. U.S. Ambassador Ellen Sauerbrey, a former elected official herself, conducted one of the training programs.

In China, the institute is taking advantage of the opportunities for women leaders in rural areas, where sometimes up to 80 percent of the men have left to seek work in the cities. A local NGO, Rural Women Knowing All, and IRI began by identifying women with leadership potential through surveys and then brought them together for training. Subsequently,

many ran successfully for village chiefs, party branch leaders, and for other positions at the grassroots level.

Once elected, a number of these leaders received additional training to show them how to share best practices, overcome common difficulties, and encourage other women to become involved in civic affairs.

IRI has expanded a 2001 pilot program to train women legislators in Argentina. The new program works to foster Argentina's democratic institutions through initiatives to strengthen accountability and transparency in the legislature, coordinate civil society efforts, and promote the development of new leaders.

Henríquez has no doubts about the importance of these types of training efforts, which she is convinced helped her and other women "promote the voice of the indigenous community in the Atlantic Coast." Henríquez said: "I believe women are prepared to confront any challenge in order to help our community. I would like to thank the International Republican Institute for the opportunity it has provided the indigenous population of the

Atlantic Coast through its women- and candidate-training sessions." However, she has one request for IRI: "These training sessions should be held more frequently and in our native indigenous language."

For more information on these programs, see: <http://www.iri.org>, <http://www.ned.org/>, and [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/democracy\\_and\\_governance/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/).



*Above, women strengthen their leadership skills at an IRI training workshop in Nicaragua.*

# Building Peace in War-Torn Countries

*War is tragic for everyone touched by it. But women caught in conflict are doubly, sometimes triply, victimized. With husbands, brothers, and fathers away fighting, in hiding, or dead, many women in war-torn countries are responsible for the survival of their families.*



*Women at Abu Shouk camp, in North Darfur, Sudan, where more than 40,000 displaced people receive food and shelter.*

Many have been forced to leave their homes and crowd into refugee camps, where they vie for food, water, fuel, and basic health care for themselves and their children. Displaced women and girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation, such as trafficking, which in turn put them at risk of psychological trauma, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and separation from their families.

Women who were denied education, jobs, and human rights under repressive regimes are ill-prepared to play a role in rebuilding their nations once armed conflict ends. Yet their participation is vital to the future of their countries.

The Bush administration has made support for women in war-torn countries a priority. “If we can succeed in advancing opportunities for women and assuring their full inclusion in the political and economic reconstruction of their countries, the better the chance that those nations will be free and democratic, prosper, and remain peaceful and stable,” says Charlotte Ponticelli, senior coordinator for international women’s issues at the U.S. Department of State. Within countries in conflict, the mission of the U.S. government is two-fold: to aid women in enduring the rigors of war and to prepare them to participate fully in building the peace.

## Surviving War

Within countries embroiled in conflict, the State Department, and particularly its Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, supports programs to improve protection and living standards for women and girls and to increase their participation in

management of refugee camps. In Fiscal Year 2004 alone, this bureau distributed nearly \$62 million in emergency aid for food, water, sanitation, and medical care for the Sudanese refugees who have fled to Chad. Since 2001, the bureau has distributed almost \$290 million in support of Afghan refugees and returnees, many of them women and children.

The State Department works primarily through large international humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to deliver aid to refugee populations in need. The department also supports nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working with these populations in order to fill much-needed gaps that fall outside the competencies of the larger international organizations.

From 1999 to 2003, the U.S. government pledged \$4 million for the ICRC's innovative Women and War project. The ICRC has produced a guide that outlines the rights of women combatants, prisoners, and victims of conflict under international humanitarian law, and issued training materials for all personnel in the field. "This was the first time there was a specific focus on women at this level, so it really has changed the way the ICRC deals with women in conflict situations," says Nicole Gaertner, the State Department's program officer for refugee women's issues.

Since 2000, the U.S. Department of State also has awarded \$10 million, primarily to NGOs, for programs that focus on prevention and response to gender-based violence, from rape and sexual exploitation to domestic violence. In more than 15 conflict areas where women are at risk—including East Timor, Eritrea, Kosovo, Liberia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Uganda—NGO grantees on the ground provide counseling, health care, and legal aid to victims of violence; teach girls how to resist sexual exploitation; and educate communities about preventing domestic abuse.

## Building the Peace

In countries emerging from conflict, the United States is committed to ensuring women's safety and security. For example, women who are unable to find jobs in their own communities in post-conflict countries are often lured with false promises of good jobs to

other countries, where they are coerced into prostitution, domestic servitude, or forced labor. In 2003, President Bush committed \$50 million for increased efforts to combat trafficking in persons worldwide, adding to the already-budgeted \$70 million for that year.

The United States is also committed to ensuring that women have a voice in establishing representative government and civil society. To that end, the United States enlisted 110 countries at the 2003 session of the U.N. General Assembly as cosponsors of a resolution calling on nations to promote and protect the right of women to express their views publicly and participate in government.

It is also why, "From Serbia to Senegal, from Kabul to Baghdad, the United States is committed to increasing women's political participation, particularly in countries emerging from conflict and unrest," says Ambassador Ellen Sauerbrey, U.S. representative to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. "U.S.-funded programs train women in Africa, the Middle East, East Asia, Latin America, Europe, and South Asia to run for office and lead nongovernmental organizations."

Ambassador Sauerbrey points out that U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, approved in the year 2000, highlights the importance of involving women in helping rebuild societies after devastating civil strife. But, she says: "This is unlikely to happen unless women have access to the basic elements of participatory democracy and understand the beneficial role they can have in the decision-making process. No approach to peace can succeed if it does not view men and women as equally important components of the solution. A successful democracy cannot exist without active participation from all its members, including women. And a vibrant democracy is necessary so that all of its members can use the system and its laws to promote their well-being."

That is why the United States is investing heavily to bring women into the political equation in post-conflict areas where their voices have been muted. U.S. efforts focus on four important areas: political participation, economic opportunities, education, and the promotion of women in civil society.

Internationally, there is growing recognition of the importance of this effort. For example, the U.N. Secretary General's *Report on Women and Peace and Security*, released in October 2004, concludes: "In the four years since the adoption of Resolution 1325, there

has been a positive shift in international understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the importance of women's participation as equal partners in all areas related to peace and society." The report takes note of "significant strides" in some countries, such as Colombia, where a President's Advisory Office on Gender Equality helped set up a working group to support women's participation in promoting peace in that nation.

### Dramatic Progress in Iraq and Afghanistan

Progress has been especially dramatic in Afghanistan (see story on page 48) and Iraq, where U.S. support has enabled women to play vital roles in forging the new governments. In Iraq, 25 of the 100 members elected to the Iraqi National Council are women, as are six ministers and seven deputy ministers of the current Iraqi cabinet.

In March 2004, then Secretary of State Colin Powell announced a \$10-million Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative to train Iraqi women in the fundamentals of democracy. The Art of Living Foundation, created by a young Iraqi woman who traveled across the desert to Baghdad to conduct stress management classes during the early days of military intervention there, is using its U.S. grant for a program focusing on the mental health needs of Iraqi women while training them for jobs.

Women representing U.S. organizations, companies, and universities are eager to assist women in Iraq, as well. The Society for Women Engineers, for example, is working to create a similar organization in Iraq, and U.S. women working in radio and television are gearing up to train Iraqi women media specialists.

Since 2002, the U.S. Congress has earmarked \$27 million for programs targeted to women in Iraq and the United States has funded more than 200 projects to benefit Afghan women and girls. New Women's Centers in each country—17 throughout Afghanistan and 20 in Iraq—provide sanctuary from violence and offer women basic education, health care, and job skills. The Mansour Women's Opportunity Center in Baghdad, for example, provides vocational training to women and girls, particularly widows and victims of rape, torture, and trafficking, and will soon provide microcredit loans to help women start home-based businesses.

In Afghanistan, there have been many successes since 2002, when President Bush and now Afghan President Hamid Karzai first created the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. These include training for teachers and midwives and projects backed by U.S. corporations and foundations to train women judges and journalists and to create community banks that can issue small loans to Afghan women.

Another important State Department initiative, called Women Leading Women in Peace: Fostering Courage for Change, promotes exchanges between businesswomen from leading companies in the United States and women trying to rebuild their post-conflict societies. The department hopes to extend the women-helping-women network so that women in countries such as Kosovo, who have polished their leadership skills and effected positive change, can share their experiences and advice with their sisters in other parts of the world.

Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky launched this initiative in cooperation with the Fortune 500 Most Powerful Women in Business Conference. The initiative started in Afghanistan, but soon it will move to the Balkans, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Recalling a recent meeting with a delegation of women from Sudan, the State Department's Ponticelli speaks eloquently about the strength and determination of women who have survived the horrors of war and their potential for waging peace. She said: "They have survived indescribable nightmares, yet they are anything but helpless victims. They are looking forward. They want a say in running the refugee camps, they want a place at the negotiating table, they want leadership positions, and they feel united even though they are from different parts of Sudan. They said, 'We all speak one language—we want peace; we all want a better future for our children.'"

No doubt they speak for women in conflict situations throughout the world.

For additional information on this issue, please see: <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/>, <http://www.state.gov/g/wi/>, and <http://www.usaid.gov/>.



*Top, U.S. emergency funding for international organizations—the World Food Program and others—helps to feed Sudanese refugees in Darfur’s Otash refugee camp. Center, left to right, women played an active role in drafting a new constitution for Afghanistan; in Hilla, Iraq, women at the Fatima Al-Zahra Center for Women’s Rights producing garments for the local market; women at the center practice their computer skills; a meeting participant at the center, which is named after the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed. Bottom, a refugee teacher works with refugee children in a makeshift classroom in Iridimi, Chad.*

## Afghanistan

### Ordinary Women Doing Extraordinary Things

*One of the critical steps in helping societies rebuild after conflict is providing support to women and children. The United States takes a holistic approach to helping women in post-conflict societies,*

from access to education and training to improving health, safety, and political empowerment.

Afghanistan is a case in point. In only three years since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan experienced the largest return of refugees in modern history. Many of the nearly four million Afghans who had fled to Iran and Pakistan—nearly half of them women and children—are now streaming back into their homeland. Three years ago, over eight million Afghans age six to 30 had little or no education. Today, approximately 4.8 million children are in school, and of these, nearly 40 percent are girls—the highest number ever in Afghan history.

Women are active in shaping the country's new government. Women held 102 of the 500 seats on the Loya Jirga, or national assembly, which in January 2004 adopted a new constitution guaranteeing women equal rights with men and a significant presence in both houses of the new parliament. Nearly every woman involved in the Loya Jirga had received some political training through U.S.-funded projects. The newly elected president, Hamid Karzai, already has appointed women leaders to his cabinet.

Women's political participation in Afghanistan was especially significant and visible in the October 2004 presidential election: They accounted for nearly 41 percent of registered voters. "In snowstorms, in sandstorms, in heavy rains, women came out to vote, and in some cases the number of women voting outnumbered the men," says Charlotte Ponticelli, senior coordinator for international women's issues at the U.S. Department of State. "This is a country where three years ago the women had no voice at all, were

subjected to horrible torture when they went out of their houses, had no education, no chance for jobs, certainly no political involvement. Now they are not only voting by the millions, but they are also running for office."

Of course, in a land long-ravaged by war and tyranny, significant challenges remain. Life expectancy is only 46 years, even less for many women. Afghanistan's maternal mortality rate is among the highest in the world. One reason is that many Afghan women give birth without trained medical assistance. Nationwide, 86 percent of Afghan women are illiterate. In rural areas, the figure reaches 92 percent.

The good news is that the country is making tremendous strides on these fronts. The United States has funded more than 200 programs that benefit women and girls. Basic health care is now available to nearly five million citizens in 13 provinces, and services for women and children are more accessible with the construction of women's health wings and the training of about 5,000 midwives and health workers. U.S. aid has helped to build or rebuild more than 200 schools, provide 25 million textbooks, and train 7,000 teachers. A teacher-training institute opened in September 2004. Seventeen Women's Centers, each providing day care services and outfitted with computers, audio-visual equipment, and a library, will offer safe havens where women can acquire the basic education, health services, job skills, and political know-how denied them under the Taliban.

To tackle the crisis of maternal mortality, the U.S. government has funded training programs for medical personnel. With backing by the U.S. Agency for

International Development (USAID), an 18-month-long curriculum developed by Dr. Jeff Smith of Johns Hopkins University Medical School has trained more than 100 midwives now at work in rural Afghanistan. After completing a child health-training program developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), physicians, nurse-midwives, and administrators at Rabia Balkhi Women's Hospital in Kabul have helped reduce the hospital's maternal mortality by 80 to 90 percent. (See pp. 22.)

To convey health information to illiterate Afghan women, HHS has collaborated in developing an interactive *Afghan Family Health Book* in the country's two major languages: Dari and Pashto. It contains more than 350 items of information on 19 health subjects, from basic sanitation and nutrition to pregnancy.

Important agents for change in Afghanistan are public-private partnerships established through the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Council member Connie Duckworth, who heads an organization of U.S. women business leaders, provided seed money to launch the Arzu carpet initiative, a cottage industry for the production and marketing of traditional hand-knotted carpets. Arzu (a word that means "hope" in Dari) filled its first order on International Women's Day, March 8, 2004. Also funded by USAID, the Arzu project uses some of its profits to support microloans and additional job training for Afghan women.

U.S. companies, foundations, universities, and other organizations have joined the U.S. government in funding a broad range of women's initiatives, from teacher-training institutes to financing for aspiring entrepreneurs. Donations from Daimler-Chrysler, for example, are helping to construct seven community banks that are expected to provide microloans to some 30,000 clients, most of them women, over the next five years. The Rockefeller Foundation has contributed to a Department of State project to train women judges.

In one of the most intriguing and successful projects funded by the Department of State and USAID, Afghan women have learned valuable skills as journalists and filmmakers while collecting oral histories of women's experiences under the Taliban. Their efforts have culminated in two film documentaries—"Afghanistan Unveiled," about abuses by the Taliban, and "Women in Politics" (a working title), about women voting and running for office—which the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) will broadcast in the United States. Both the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council and PBS have "adopted" the project, provid-

ing additional funding and training. Six of the original 10 women in the project support their families as video filmmakers, at the same time using their new skills to educate other Afghan women about their civil and human rights.

Though the successes are many, the work in Afghanistan is far from finished. Meanwhile, the world can celebrate the progress these remarkable women have made. As First Lady Laura Bush noted in October 2004,

"The struggle for women's rights is a story of ordinary women doing extraordinary things. And today, the women of Afghanistan are writing a new chapter in their history."

For more information on the developments in Afghanistan, see: <http://www.state.gov/g/wi>, <http://www.state.gov/p/sa/ci/af/>, [http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia\\_near\\_east/afghanistan/](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/afghanistan/), and [http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding\\_afghanistan/afghan\\_women.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding_afghanistan/afghan_women.html).



*Above, Afghan secondary-school girls look at sample presidential ballots on September 30, 2004, during a class teaching them about voting.*

# Combating Violence Against Women

*Eliminating violence against women has long been a goal of the United States and other members of the United Nations.*



*A victim of child trafficking in the Philippines.*

Rape, domestic abuse, and honor killings are some of the horrible forms of violence against women that are receiving much-needed attention and legislative responses at the local, national, and international levels, especially following the Beijing conference on women in 1995. The United States already has instituted bilateral and broad-based programs to address such problems. But clearly there is much more to do.

On International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2004, Andrew Natsios, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), stated that, “Not only does such violence impede women’s ability to live full and productive lives, but it restricts their contributions to family, society, and economic development.” In Darfur, Sudan, Natsios noted that women still suffer from an “appalling number of rapes and other sexual violence, branding, maiming, and displacement ... leading to the disintegration of families, ostracism of the victims, and ultimately mental, medical, and economic consequences of untold proportions.” He cited the \$113 million that USAID had sent to the Darfur region to help with shelter, food, medical care, and other relief, which includes specific funding for Physicians for Human Rights to address sexual violence.

Gender-based violence is of particular concern when dealing with refugees and displaced persons, since the majority are women and children. They are exposed to violence at every stage of their flight, and they are at risk even after they become refugees. They face horrific dangers: sexual violence in the form of rape and exploitation, as well as after-effects—HIV/AIDS, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other afflictions—that may not appear for months or even years.

Improving protection for women in conflict situations and for refugee women and girls and ensuring that humanitarian programs focus on their needs and concerns are U.S. government goals. In Fiscal Year 2003, the U.S. Department of State provided over \$4 million of its contributions to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for women and children's special programming. In addition, it gave more than \$2 million to UNHCR and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for gender-based violence-prevention programs. The article "Building Peace in War-Torn Countries" points out that since 2002, the United States has provided some \$10 million to NGOs for programs that focus on prevention and response to rape, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and more. In over 15 conflict areas where women are at risk—including East Timor, Eritrea, Kosovo, Liberia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Uganda—NGO grantees on the ground provide counseling, health care, and legal aid to victims of violence; they teach girls how to resist sexual exploitation; and they educate entire communities about preventing domestic abuse.

Among the forms of violence against women the United States is fighting both domestically and internationally are the rise in trafficking in persons and the harmful practice of female genital cutting, which is spreading through immigration to more countries. The United States has sought to renew the world's attention to these scourges, allocating additional resources to eliminate them.

### Trafficking in Persons: A Human Rights Concern

Human trafficking is first and foremost a grave violation of human rights. It inflicts unspeakable physical and psychological damage on its victims, primarily women and children, and it feeds growing global health problems, such as sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. It also fuels organized crime, undermining the safety and security of communities throughout the world.

Emphasizing the U.S. commitment to ending this plague, President Bush brought international attention to trafficking in persons during his 2003 U.N. General Assembly address. He announced the launch of a \$50-million U.S. anti-trafficking initiative. "We must show new energy in fighting back an old evil," he said. "Nearly two centuries after the abolition of the

transatlantic slave trade, and more than a century after slavery was officially ended in its last strongholds, the trade in human beings for any purpose must not be allowed to thrive in our time." In June 2004, the Department of State announced that the recipients for the president's new anti-trafficking initiative would be Brazil, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Moldova, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania.

The Bush administration has provided more than \$295 million to support anti-trafficking programs in more than 120 countries. This funding helps countries to develop laws, create special law enforcement units to investigate cases, rescue victims, build emergency shelters, conduct voluntary repatriation for displaced victims, run information and awareness campaigns, and create long-term rehabilitation and vocational training programs.

As the president mentioned in his U.N. address, state-sanctioned ownership of human beings ended early in the 20th century. However, each year an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 people are illegally trafficked as slaves across international borders. Millions more are trafficked within the borders of their own countries. Estimates of the total number of victims of trafficking reach the millions.

According to Ambassador John R. Miller, senior advisor to the U.S. Secretary of State and director of the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, U.S. data find that 80 percent of the trafficked persons are female and up to 50 percent are children. "Sex slavery ... is the dominant form," he noted, "then domestic servitude, both of which are largely women or girls. What was once a race issue has become primarily a gender issue."

Ambassador Miller feels "a corner has been turned" in increasing global attention to this problem. He called the 8,000 or so prosecutions and 2,800 convictions worldwide in 2003 an "enormous" increase. And he pointed to a number of U.N. protocols and other international covenants calling for the abolition of trafficking in persons.

In the United States, rising awareness of this modern-day form of slavery and its consequences also has intensified advocacy by faith-based and human rights nongovernmental organizations. Coupled with data that showed the United States was a growing destination for victims, advocacy efforts led to passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000, and amendments that strengthened it in 2003. Among its most significant provisions are protections

and assistance for victims, bilateral assistance for countries fighting trafficking, a penalty of up to 20 years in prison for Americans involved in human trafficking, and a mandate for the Department of State to issue an annual global report on the problem.

### Trafficking: The International Effort

The United States is confronting nations that profit from or tolerate human trafficking. Those countries face possible sanctions that include the loss of U.S. military and economic assistance and U.S. support at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This approach and the State Department's annual listing of countries in its *Trafficking in Persons Report* have helped heighten international awareness of human trafficking.

The U.S. report is a diplomatic tool, encouraging governments around the world to cooperate in the global effort to end trafficking in persons. The 2004 report looks at 140 countries that have significant numbers of victims of severe forms of trafficking. Countries are rated according to their efforts to eliminate trafficking in persons.

Tier 1 countries are those that comply with the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Tier 2 countries do not yet fully comply with these standards, but they have been making significant efforts to do so. Tier 2 Watch List countries require special scrutiny because they have a high number of victims or have failed to provide sufficient evidence of their efforts to combat trafficking. Tier 3 countries do not satisfy the minimum standards of the TVPA or show any effort to do so.

A Tier 3 assessment can result in the withholding of U.S. nonhumanitarian, nontrade-related assistance to those countries. Countries listed on Tier 3 can avoid sanctions by taking swift action within three months of the report's release.

Bangladesh was one of the countries that did just that. Within 90 days of the release of the 2004 report, its government substantially increased anti-trafficking

activities. It opened an office on trafficking in persons. It completed 17 trafficking-related cases, resulting in 30 convictions. It launched a number of law enforcement operations against suspected traffickers, leading to the arrest of 47 persons and the rescue of 102 victims. As a result of its efforts, Bangladesh was moved from Tier 3 onto the Tier 2 Watch List.

Through the Department of State, U.S. assistance goes to NGOs also combating trafficking. The Angel Coalition, one of the groups funded by the department, assists NGOs in Russia and is building an international hotline to improve investigation of trafficking rings that will lead to more convictions in court. Grants from the U.S. Agency for International

Development (USAID) go to NGOs such as the International Justice Mission, a faith-based organization fighting trafficking in Cambodia.

The United States works through international organizations, too, to fight trafficking in persons. This includes promoting and supporting resolutions in various U.N. forums, and providing voluntary contributions to U.N. bodies that

assist victims of trafficking and countries that suppress trafficking. For example, U.S. contributions enable the U.N. to translate and distribute public service anti-trafficking announcements in Chinese, French, German, Hausa, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili. U.S. funds also were used to help establish a center in Indonesia where victims receive medical, legal, and psychological care before returning home.

To bring greater international attention to the problem of a growing demand for child prostitutes, and to stimulate foreign government action, the United States cohosted a luncheon panel discussion in New York with World Vision and pop singer Ricky Martin in 2004. At the event, Martin spoke eloquently about the work of his foundation and the



*This page, sex workers at a bar in the lakeside resort of Ohrid, Macedonia, after a raid by police to discourage trafficking. Facing page, Muna Maġar, once one of thousands of Nepali girls trafficked into India to work as prostitutes. After escaping this life, she works at the Nepal-India border, checking every vehicle for illegal trafficking activity.*

urgent need for the United Nations to help governments and NGOs end the tragedy of child sex tourism. The United States also has signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, part of the U.N. Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. The next step is for the U.S. Senate to approve it.

Progress in ending trafficking in persons for sex purposes requires addressing both supply and demand. The U.S. government is dealing with “the demand side of the equation”—as Ambassador Miller puts it—going after the people who exploit women and children for prostitution because prostitution provides a strong profit motive for traffickers and a huge demand for victims.

### U.S. Domestic Efforts Multiply

As the United States fights the trade in human beings abroad, it also has launched an unprecedented effort to deal with it at home. Last August, for example, a Federal District Court sentenced two women to prison for the maximum time allowable—more than 17 years—for bringing four Mexican girls into the United States and forcing them into prostitution.

Rising levels of U.S. assistance to victims of trafficking clearly demonstrate the importance that the U.S. government places on protecting vulnerable women and children. Victims can receive, for example, cash, medical care, legal aid, and the opportunity to apply for permanent residence in the United States. Dozens of NGOs throughout the United States have received more than \$35 million to aid these victims. In 2003, the TVPA was amended to include a provision that allows victims to sue their traffickers in federal district court.

The United States has seen quick results at home after passage of TVPA in 2000. Within the first two years, federal prosecutors initiated prosecutions against 79 traffickers—three times as many as in the two previous years. Nearly 400 victims in the United States received assistance through the Departments of

Health and Human Services (HHS), Justice, State, and Labor, among others. Such focused efforts are increasing.

In Fiscal Year 2003, HHS issued nearly \$3.5 million to 15 organizations to meet the needs of victims of trafficking, including temporary housing, training in independent living skills, cultural orientation, and transportation needs, as well as access to appropriate educational programs and legal assistance and referrals. HHS may also provide victims with intensive case-management programs to help them obtain housing, find employment, receive mental health counseling, and obtain specialized foster care programs for their children.

The U.S. Department of Defense has issued a zero-tolerance policy for any service member found participating in human trafficking, and it has instituted a universal mandatory training program about sex slavery. Legislation is currently under review by the U.S. Congress to make brothel patronage a crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The United States also is working with

the United Nations to ensure that its peacekeepers do not visit brothels and thereby attract or subsidize human trafficking for sexual purposes.

The U.S. government has made it clear that it will not tolerate Americans participating in child sex tourism. In 2003, President Bush signed the U.S. Protect Act, which imposes very strict penalties, including up to 30 years in prison, on Americans who travel to foreign countries to have sex with minors. The U.S. government collaborates with other countries in, for example, Southeast Asia, to crack down on any U.S. citizen who participates in this heinous activity.

### Female Genital Cutting

Like trafficking in persons, female genital cutting (FGC), also known as female genital mutilation or female circumcision, has only recently gained attention as a practice that harms victims, with serious and potentially grave health consequences.



Some of the immediate health consequences of this practice include hemorrhage or shock, which can result in death, severe pain, injury to the urethra, acute urine retention, infections, and failure to heal. Long-term complications include recurrent urinary tract infections, pelvic infection, infertility, scarring, and obstructed childbirth.

There are many reasons the world has found it difficult to eradicate this violent practice. For one thing, many practicing communities fail to understand the relationship between FGC and its serious health and psychological consequences. In addition, some practicing societies see it as a way to ensure fidelity or make a girl more marriageable, and thereby attract a better dowry. Many say it is an act of love for their daughters, who typically undergo FGC between the ages of two and 11. Some believe it is mandated by their religion or that it will promote good health. In some societies, uncircumcised women may not hold elective office.

Since the 1980s, USAID has provided assistance to eliminate female genital cutting. Yet, the practice has proved tenacious. In Egypt, for example, prevalence remained at 97 percent from 1994 to 2003; in Mali, it declined a mere 2 percent, from 94 percent to 92 percent, over that period. Sadly, the age of mutilation is going down—in Egypt from age 10 to age three, and in Mali from age three to one. Minority groups in some Asian countries, including India and Indonesia, still practice it.

The practice has spread through immigration to Europe and North America. It is now an issue in major U.S. cities like Los Angeles, San Diego, Houston, New York, and Boston. Consequently, the U.S. government has accelerated its domestic efforts. In 1996, Congress passed a law making performance of female genital cutting on a girl under the age of 18 a federal crime. On February 6, 2004—Zero Tolerance Day for FGC—a symposium was held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., to focus on the challenges and best practices in getting local communities to abandon female genital cutting. Speakers ranged from a village worker in Senegal to a Boston physician who dealt with the problem.

The U.S. government funds educational and information programs about the harmful effects of FGC in numerous countries, increasing funding from zero to \$500,000 in 2002, and again in 2004 to \$2.2 million. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea,

Kenya, Mali, Senegal, Somalia, Togo, and Yemen, U.S. funds have helped train health care providers about FGC's long-term consequences, supported research on the prevalence of the practice, and helped countries develop and test strategies to end it.

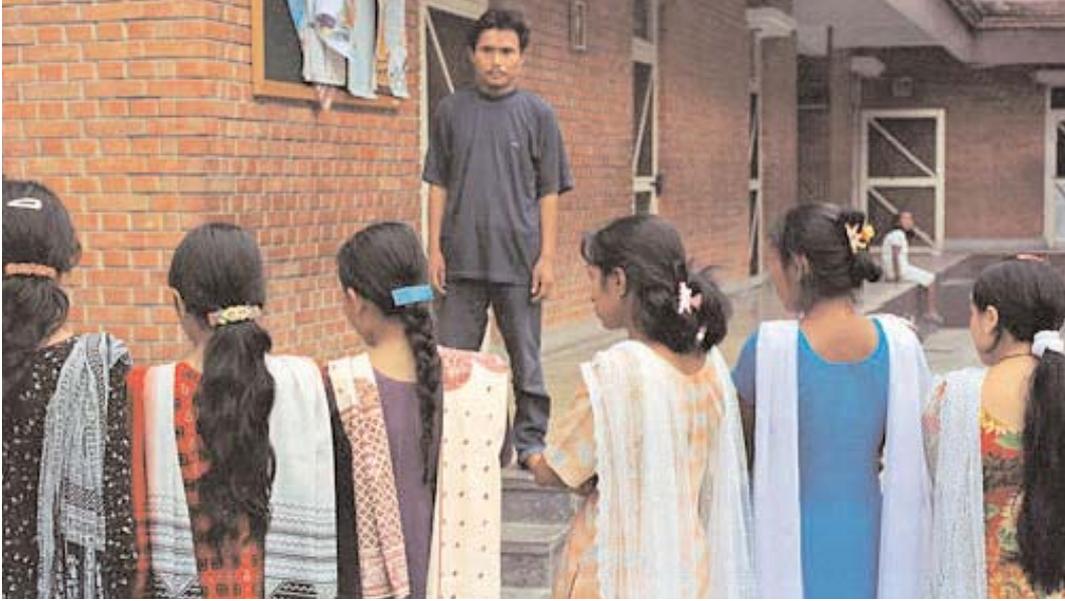
Substantial results are evident already. In Senegal, where studies estimate that 20 percent of women have undergone FGC, USAID funding allowed Tostan—an NGO based in that country—to develop a village empowerment project to address women's health issues such as FGC in a holistic manner. The project strives to educate men as well as women about the consequences. After just two years, women participants demonstrated the most knowledge about the practice and experienced the greatest shift in attitudes. Surprisingly, 105 villages in the region (with some 80,000 inhabitants) held a public ceremony at which they issued a declaration ending the practice.

It is too soon to judge the long-term success of these efforts. But Dr. Abdelhadi Eltahir, USAID's senior technical advisor on female genital cutting, points to surveys that show a decline in the practice. He is encouraged by an increase in public declarations against the practice in villages where it used to be acceptable. Bougouni, Mali, is such a village. According to Eltahir, its chief has declared a 10-year moratorium on girls' circumcision. The village chief believes setting a specific time frame for ending it is easier to impose than a decision to stop the practice immediately. And he believes that 10 years will be sufficient time for the community to abandon the practice permanently.

For more information on the U.S. government's anti-trafficking initiatives, please visit <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/> and <http://www.usdoj.gov/trafficking.htm>. For information on USAID and U.S. State Department assistance to end the practice of female genital cutting, see: [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/pop/techareas/fgc/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/techareas/fgc/) and <http://www.state.gov/g/wi/rls/rep/crfgm/>.



*Facing page, top, women rescued from brothels line up to identify an alleged trafficker at the Maiti Nepal shelter in Kathmandu. Center left, in Moldova, a woman returns to the bar where a woman approached her with offers of good jobs in the West. Actually, she was being enticed into prostitution. Center right, in Kosovo, the U.N. Mission questions dancers from local nightclubs in an effort to determine whether they have been trafficked and forced to become prostitutes. Bottom, prostitution is big business along the Czech Republic borders with Germany and Austria.*



## Fighting Human Trafficking in Europe and Eurasia

*Of the 600,000 to 800,000 persons the U.S. government estimates are trafficked across international borders each year worldwide, Europe and Eurasia probably have the highest percentage of victims per capita.*

Over the past decade, as organized crime exploited the chaos and new poverty that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, that region has been the fastest-growing source in the world. It is second only to Southeast Asia in total numbers, with a minimum of 175,000 to 500,000 persons trafficked annually. This figure does not count those who are trafficked within countries.

Katya is one of those unlucky women trafficked across borders. With a two-year-old daughter and a failing marriage in the Czech Republic, Katya took the advice of a “friend” and decided to make good money as a waitress in The Netherlands. Leaving her daughter behind, she and four other young women were driven to Amsterdam, where a Dutch trafficker joined their Czech trafficker. Katya was taken to a brothel. After saying “I will not do this,” she was told, “Yes, you will, if you want your daughter back in the Czech Republic to live.”

After years of threats and forced prostitution, Katya was finally rescued by a cab driver. She is now working at a hospital and studying for a degree in social work.

Supported in part by U.S. funding, people like Sister Eugenia Bonetti of Italy are on the frontlines of fighting human trafficking in Europe and Eurasia. Bonetti, coordinator of anti-trafficking strategies for the Italian Union of Major Superiors, has seen firsthand the injustice suffered by trafficked women over her 24-year career in Kenya and Italy. Bonetti and her team of some 200 sisters, working full-time in the fight against trafficking in persons (TIP), have opened their homes throughout Italy to provide shelter, security, and care to hundreds of victims. She also has worked with nuns in Nigeria, encouraging local efforts in the remotest and poorest communities to prevent trafficking and to assist in the rehabilitation of repatriated victims.

Efforts such as Bonetti’s are the reason why the U.S. government has provided more than \$70 million for anti-trafficking programs around the world in the last fiscal year alone.

Progress in the battle against human trafficking is difficult to quantify, largely because it is an underground criminal activity, and also because awareness of the crime is relatively recent. However, U.S. programs are having good effects. The U.S. annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*, for example, has stimulated action by offering frank assessments of countries that may have laws but fail to implement them or that fail to prosecute the traffickers. The report has proven useful to U.S. embassies in engaging governments around the globe.

In Eastern Europe, the desire to join the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also has been an incentive for governments to develop national action plans and to pass legislation against human trafficking. A number of countries in the region have demonstrated the importance they place on fighting this scourge by including references to their efforts in their official country statements at the 2003 and 2004 U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

Educating people and raising awareness of the human rights problem has led to helpful research and programs to assist former victims. Research in Ukraine has shown that 33 percent of the women trafficked had previously been victims of domestic violence. The lack of jobs, the need to provide for dependent family members, and the lure of nearby countries with higher standards of living made many women perfect prey for traffickers promising employment and travel abroad.

One remedy: A U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) project in Ukraine with Winrock International, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) working with the poor in many countries, has established trafficking prevention centers where victims can seek job training as well as crisis counseling. Similar projects have started in Russia, Belarus, and Moldova.

Another nongovernmental organization, La Strada, developed a handbook for telephone hotline workers. It provides information on various kinds of work visas, international labor agreements, job contracts, consular telephone numbers to call in Ukraine and abroad, and what to do and where to go if an individual or a family member becomes a victim. USAID has supported hotlines in many countries of the Europe and Eurasia region, including most recently in the Kyrgyz Republic.



USAID-funded training institutes have begun to focus on two other important groups: journalists and law enforcement. After two days of training, reporters have typically revised their approach to the subject, treating it more seriously and less sensationally in spite of the danger involved. (In 2003, several journalists who had been reporting on trafficking and corruption in Uzbekistan and Montenegro were killed under suspicious circumstances.)

Law enforcement training, based on a manual created by the United Nations Development Programme and the International Center for Migration

Policy Development, has educated police, prosecutors, and judges on how to handle human trafficking cases and how to identify and protect victims. Training also raised awareness of the deep link between trafficking and corruption. Programs, notably in Central Asia, have emphasized the importance of regional cooperation between governments and NGOs, and on the training of border guards and consular officials.

And, most recently, the United States is assisting Romania in developing a victim-witness coordinator program based on U.S. experience, which hopefully will lead to training modules that can be applied throughout the region.



*Above, teenage girls at a Moldovan orphanage for abandoned children. International organizations like UNICEF are working to prevent these children, seen as the most vulnerable to traffickers, from becoming victims of this scourge.*

# Advancing Women's Rights in the United States

*The equality of women is a deeply held notion for the American people, and the continued advancement of equality and opportunity for women everywhere, including at home in the United States, is an important priority for U.S. policymakers.*



*Second graders Lizabeth Lalunera, left, and Prerna Shah listen to their teacher at the Mosaica Academy charter school in Bensalem, Pennsylvania.*

Over the past decade, the United States has taken significant, tangible steps to improve education, health, family life, economic opportunities, and political empowerment for American women.

These advances have not come in isolation. U.S. domestic efforts to expand opportunities and protect the rights of women often have served as models for individuals and groups in other countries. Similarly, many of the country's domestic programs for women have benefited enormously from the sustained attention of women and organizations throughout the world.

The advancement of women ranks high as both a moral imperative and one of the keys to a better future for any society. President George W. Bush has said, "America will always stand firm for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity," and he specifically includes "respect for women" among those nonnegotiable demands.

Progress for women is inseparable from the social and political progress of every society. When women are oppressed, denied freedom, and held back from opportunity, then an entire society suffers, not just its female members.

This is as true for the United States as for any other nation. "Women's issues," said then Secretary of State Colin Powell, "affect not only women; they have profound implications for all humankind. Women's issues are human rights issues. We, as a world community, cannot even begin to tackle the array of problems and challenges confronting us without the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of life."

## Education

Americans recognize that education and training are the keys to a brighter future for any society, and the Bush administration has made quality education one of its highest domestic priorities. First Lady Laura Bush, a former public school teacher and librarian, is among those who believe education is “our most urgent priority and should have the first and highest call on our time and resources.”

The centerpiece of President Bush’s education initiatives is a landmark reform known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Simply put, the No Child Left Behind initiative expects every child to succeed in learning, and it expects every school to provide the means for that success.

Former Secretary of Education Rod Paige put it this way: “The No Child Left Behind Act is a more ... responsible approach to education. Like a successful business, the No Child Left Behind Act introduces measurement of progress, makes the system transparent and accountable, and introduces consumer choice. These ingredients ultimately make the system better and provide a better product.” Moreover, he noted, there is already “considerable evidence that the law is working. While fourth-grade reading scores between 1992 and 2000 remained stagnant, there has been a five-point increase in the last three years nationally. ... The percentage of African-American and Hispanic fourth-graders who know their reading and math basics increased substantially more between 2000 and 2003 than in the previous eight years combined. As a result, the achievement gap is closing.”

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, the formula for success is based on four key principles: demand accountability for results; emphasize what works, based on scientific research; expand parental options; and expand local control and flexibility.

Such focus can only help improve the gains girls and women in the United States are already making. In many subject areas, girls have been closing the achievement gap with their male counterparts or exceeding them. Since 1982, for example, women have earned more than half of all bachelor degrees. They are enrolling more often in nontraditional fields such as architecture, engineering, and the sciences.

Nevertheless, the Bush administration continues to undertake a number of education initiatives to provide greater opportunities for girls and women in the United States. For example, an innovative program to

encourage women in technology—Girls’ E-Mentoring in Science, Engineering, and Technology—provides mentoring, group support, and tutoring for girls aged 13 to 18 by linking teenagers with professional women in those technical professions.

The U.S. government also places an emphasis on early childhood education to ensure children are ready for school and ready to learn. “Head Start,” noted then Secretary Paige, “is a critical component of our efforts to ensure that all children, regardless of their family background, enter school prepared to succeed.” Including 2005 funding, the Bush administration has requested \$750 million in new funding for the Head Start pre-kindergarten program.

The U.S. government understands that more can be done.

Tommy Thompson, former secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which administers the Head Start programs, explained it this way: “Data show that children served by this program indeed become more school-ready than they would otherwise be—but they still lag far behind their more economically advantaged peers. We can protect the Head Start program that has served us well, and yet still aim higher, to serve Head Start children even better.” The U.S. government has instituted a National Reporting System to determine which Head Start centers are achieving their goals, and it has provided additional training for more than 50,000 Head Start teachers.

At the higher-education level, the United States has expanded funding for Pell Grants by 47 percent, or nearly \$4 billion, to help students pay for college. As funding rose, the number of Pell recipients has increased by nearly one million. These increased funds substantially help women, who constitute almost 64 percent of Pell Grant recipients, compared with more than 56 percent of undergraduates overall in the United States. Moreover, according to Secretary Paige, “Pell Grants are the most effective of the student aid programs in ensuring that low- and middle-income students have access to a college education.”

## Health

American women are living longer, healthier lives than ever before; yet like women elsewhere in the world, they face difficult health challenges.

Heart disease, for example, kills more women than all forms of cancer combined. That’s why the

president's 2004 budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) provides over \$382 million for cardiovascular and pulmonary disease research and prevention activities related to women. It also includes \$12 million for the centers' WISEWOMAN program, which offers screenings for high blood pressure and cholesterol, and other health interventions to help prevent cardiovascular and other chronic diseases in women.

Estimates are that in 2004 more than 200,000 American women were diagnosed with breast cancer. Regular screening for breast cancer continues to be the most effective way to detect this disease early and to save lives, and mammograms are the best screening tool available.

Recognizing this, the NIH invested about \$700 million in 2004 for breast cancer research; it will spend more than that in 2005. The CDC devoted over \$200 million in 2004, with plans to spend more in 2005, on an early detection program that promotes mammograms and helps low-income women afford screenings for breast and cervical cancer. The Department of Defense invested approximately \$150 million for its breast cancer research program in 2004. All of this funding will help lead to better treatments and new hope for many Americans and their families.

The administration, in the words of Secretary Thompson, is "working hard to create a future where women and men are free of the fear of breast cancer. ... My department is also working to improve the overall health of women by conducting research in cervical cancer, osteoporosis, obesity, diabetes, and every other major health issue. We're also leading the Heart Truth Campaign. This campaign is designed to increase women's awareness about heart disease, the number-one killer of women, and encourage women to take their heart health seriously. These, along with our efforts to fight breast cancer, are all great steps my department is taking to improve the quality of all women's health."

To lower costs and increase accessibility to health care for the elderly and disabled, the Bush administration has provided a new prescription drug benefit under the nation's Medicare program. In addition to prescription drug coverage, the program offers all senior citizens, a majority of whom are women, the opportunity to benefit from Medicare drug-discount cards; poorer Americans, for example, can receive an extra \$600 to help pay the cost of their medicines. President

Bush championed this program to give older Americans "better choices and more control over their health care ... more access to comprehensive exams, disease screenings, and other preventive care, so that seniors across this land can live better and healthier lives."

The administration also has established new tax-free health savings accounts for individuals and groups to help them plan and save for unexpected health expenses. It also has proposed the establishment of association health plans to allow small businesses to band together to negotiate more favorable health insurance rates and coverage. This would especially benefit the large number of women-owned small businesses sprouting up across the country.

As with its international initiatives to fight the scourge of HIV/AIDS, the U.S. government through the Department of Health and Human Services has established eight research objectives for the prevention, treatment, and understanding of HIV/AIDS in girls and women. The department also conducts a Safe Mother Initiative, a program that collects data and conducts research on how to improve maternal health. Moreover, the Bush administration has secured record funding levels of \$4.6 billion for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program for low-income mothers and their young children.

The Bush administration recognizes, however, that good health for women, and for all Americans, demands personal responsibility as much as government attention. The Healthier U.S. Initiative utilizes the expertise of federal agencies to inform Americans of small steps they can take to achieve greater fitness. Simple steps taken to engage in regular physical activity, eat a more healthful diet, get preventive screenings, and avoid risky behaviors can greatly reduce the risk and burden of the chronic diseases and conditions that affect many Americans.

## Economic Opportunity

Women are making a significant contribution to the health and well-being of Americans today. Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao explains why: "Many women today work in the home, raising the families who are the future of our country. Women today comprise more than half of all workers in management, professional, and related occupations in the United States. And women are at the forefront of entrepreneurship, creating millions of new jobs and building



Top, Dr. Tasha Inniss, who received her mathematics doctorate from the University of Maryland, teaches algebra class at Trinity College in Washington, D.C. Center left, "I'm learning my alphabet," says Briana Thompson, 4, who attends the South Jackson Head Start Center in Jackson, Mississippi, with her friend Rachel Smith, 5, left. Center middle, University of Chicago researcher Dr. Sunanda Kane, one of many American women who have become physicians, works with a patient. Center right, Lisa Taylor captures the children's attention during a reading session at the Family Resource Center in Pittsburg, Kansas. Bottom, students use a microscope during biology class at a Houston, Texas, secondary school.

our nation's economic security. Women are also pioneers in volunteerism and philanthropy."

Women cannot achieve such successes or equality unless they have equal access to ownership, to private property, and to capital. All of these coalesce in business ownership. One of the surest signs that women are advancing economically in a country is the growth in the number of women-owned businesses.

Within the private sector, the growth of women entrepreneurs has been spectacular; that group now constitutes the fastest-growing component of the small-business market. The number of private, women-owned businesses grew by 14 percent from 1997 to 2002, compared with 7 percent growth for U.S. businesses overall. Employment at women-owned businesses has increased by 30 percent, compared with 18 percent for all businesses nationwide.

The head of the Small Business Administration, Hector V. Barreto, believes women entrepreneurs make an important contribution to the overall U.S. economy. In fact, he has said that women business owners are "where the growth and the jobs are coming from!"

Part of the reason for this is that the economic climate in the United States is more favorable to small businesses. Like all U.S. businesses, women-owned businesses have benefited from recent changes to U.S. tax policies that encourage the purchase of capital equipment, accelerate tax relief for earnings used for reinvestment and expansion, and reduce capital gains and dividend taxes. The phasing out of the estate tax (or the so-called death tax) has removed a discriminatory tax burden for thousands of family businesses, farms, and ranches, whose heirs may otherwise have faced selling their businesses just to pay that tax.

But there are many other ways the U.S. government under the current administration supports women-owned businesses. For example, it has:

- \* Increased government contracts to businesses headed by women;
- \* Guaranteed small-business loans of \$2.4 billion in 2003;
- \* Operated 87 Women's Business Centers around the nation, offering counseling, financing, and workshops to over 100,000 clients in 2003 alone;
- \* Sponsored five Women's Entrepreneurship Summits in two years, where women can learn about acquiring capital, finding affordable health care, and corporate networking; and
- \* Launched a one-stop entrepreneur web site with online information and resources called [www.women-21.gov](http://www.women-21.gov).

In addition to business ownership, American women continue to make gains in so-called nontraditional occupations such as insurance sales staff, purchasing managers, photographers, physicians, chemists, mail carriers, and lawyers. Women also head some of the most vibrant companies, sit on the U.S. Supreme Court, are elected governors of states across the country, and head universities.

Meanwhile, the United States has sought to make it more affordable for women who want to stay home to care for their children or elderly parents to do so. Whether working inside or outside the home, women benefit from the increase in the child tax credit, the accelerated elimination of a marriage penalty in the tax code, and the expansion of those who qualify for the lowest (10 percent) tax bracket. As a result, estimates show that more than 80 million women will save, on average, over \$1,800 each year on their income taxes. Other provisions signed into law in the recent past enhance the ability of women to save for their retirement and guarantee overtime protection for 6.7 million low-income, salaried workers, four million of whom are women.

## Political Empowerment

Women in the United States have made great strides in improving their lives and their influence. More women, for example, now occupy senior government positions and are succeeding as business leaders and entrepreneurs.

More women, in fact, have been appointed to senior-level positions in the federal government during the past four years than in any previous administration. These appointments included three Cabinet positions—Gale Norton, secretary of interior; Ann Veneman, secretary of agriculture; and Elaine Chao, secretary of labor—as well as Condoleezza Rice, national security advisor, and Margaret Spellings, assistant to the president for domestic policy. In addition, the administration's first head of the Environmental Protection Agency was Christine Todd Whitman, former governor of New Jersey.

As First Lady Laura Bush said, "I'm proud that, in my husband's administration, there are more women in senior positions than in any presidential administration in history. Dr. Condoleezza Rice advises the president on foreign policy. Margaret Spellings is in charge of domestic policy. That means, at the White House, women are in charge of everything abroad and everything at home. That sounds about right to me." President Bush is continuing this practice of appointing women to top-level, decision-making

jobs in his second administration. He has selected Dr. Rice to succeed Secretary of State Colin Powell, Margaret Spellings to succeed Secretary of Education Rod Paige, and Harriet Miers as his incoming White House counsel.

### Protecting Women and Families

Domestic violence betrays the most basic duties of life. It is a serious crime that must be confronted by individuals, by communities, and by government.

The Bush administration is committed to fighting domestic violence. Violence Against Women programs administered by the Departments of Justice and of Health and Human Services receive strong federal and congressional support. They provide shelter and counseling for victims of domestic violence, as well as vigorous prosecution of individuals charged with assault, abuse, trafficking, and stalking. In early 2004, the Justice Department provided \$20 million to help 15 communities create Family Justice Centers, an initiative unveiled by President Bush to provide comprehensive services under one roof for victims of domestic violence. The U.S. government also has sought to educate men on the tragic effects of domestic violence. It has launched initiatives such as the "Take the Pledge" campaign, which calls upon men to pledge neither to commit nor to condone domestic violence.

As then U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft observed: "Our children absorb the values we pass on to them; and they in turn pass these values on to their children. But when families are wracked by violence and abuse, values are corrupted. The messages transmitted by parents are messages of violence, cruelty, and powerlessness. We must work together to ensure that victims have the opportunity to escape violence and to transform their lives and the lives of their children."

Under the Bush administration, welfare reform is about empowering families, including single-parent families, to become self-supporting. In October 2004, the Department of Health and Human Services announced that the welfare caseload in the United States had dropped to fewer than two million families for the first time since February 1970.

The U.S. government is assisting low-income families make the transition from welfare to work. Single mothers overwhelmingly head low-income families covered under the 1996 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. Its provisions for helping these women and other family members move toward gainful employment and self-sufficiency are proving remarkably successful. Since 1996,

\* Welfare rolls nationwide have fallen more than 60 percent for individuals and almost 55 percent for families;

\* Child poverty has dropped from 20.5 percent to 17.6 percent;

\* The poverty rate for African-American children has declined from 39.9 percent to 33.6 percent; and

\* The poverty rate for Hispanic children has dropped from 40.3 percent to 29.7 percent.

Childcare remains a critical need for many families, particularly single, working mothers. The rapidly declining welfare caseloads have allowed states to more than triple childcare funding between 1996 and 2004.

To help women who have been abandoned by the fathers of their children, the U.S. government also has made it a priority to find those fathers and enforce child support.

The Bush administration has launched a Healthy Marriage Initiative to help couples acquire the skills and knowledge they need to sustain an enriching, mutually respectful, and beneficial marriage and to sustain a healthy environment in which to raise their children.

One reason for this initiative is that data show that families with married parents are healthier, have lower incidence of domestic violence and abuse, and earn higher levels of income and education. According to Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Children and Families Wade Horn, the U.S. emphasis is "on healthy marriages—not marriage for the sake of marriage, not marriage at any cost—but healthy marriages that provide a strong and stable environment for raising children. It is about helping couples who choose marriage for themselves gain access to the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages."

Both domestically and internationally, the Bush administration and the U.S. government as a whole will remain committed to achieving equality of opportunity for women and men, empowering women both in the marketplace and in decision-making positions, expanding educational opportunities for girls and women, improving women's health, protecting women and children from violence and exploitation, and strengthening marriage and family life. The U.S. experience clearly shows that, as the status of women advances, so will that of their families, their communities, their workplaces, and their nation.





*President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush read *The Legend of the Blue Bonnet* to British and American children during a reading event at the British Museum in London, July 19, 2001.*

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Remarks at the Summit on Women Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century  
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<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020319-2.html>

President George W. Bush  
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## U.S. Government Resources

The U.S. government supports women's advancement through programs housed in many offices, both in the United States and abroad:

### U.S. Department of State

Global Affairs—Office of International Women's Issues: Coordinates the integration of women's issues into broader U.S. strategic, economic, and diplomatic goals.

<http://www.state.gov/g/wi/>

Global Affairs—Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons: Coordinates international anti-trafficking efforts across the U.S. government, and publishes the *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/>

International Organization Affairs Bureau—Office of Social and Humanitarian Affairs: Coordinates U.S. participation in U.N. bodies that deal with human rights, humanitarian relief and refugees, women's issues, and trafficking in persons.

<http://www.state.gov/p/io/>

International Organization Affairs Bureau—Office of Economic Development Affairs: Coordinates U.S. participation in U.N. bodies that deal with economic policy, poverty eradication, and hunger.

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Bureau—Office of Multilateral Affairs: Works on human rights issues in the U.N. system.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/>

Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau—Promotes mutual understanding through international educational exchanges and training programs, and personal, professional, and institutional ties between private citizens and organizations in the United States and abroad.

<http://exchanges.state.gov/>

Legal Adviser—Office of Human Rights and Refugees and Office of Law Enforcement and Intelligence are among the offices under the Legal Adviser that are involved with issues affecting women.

<http://www.state.gov/s/l/>

Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau—Coordinates U.S. international refugee and migration policies, and provides humanitarian assistance through the multilateral system.

<http://www.state.gov/g/prm/>

### U.S. Agency for International Development

Office of Women in Development—Provides technical assistance to USAID missions, and develops approaches to new and emerging issues; sponsors projects on education, economic growth, trafficking, and violence against women that promote women's development.

[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/wid/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/)

## U.S. Department of Education

Institutional Development and Undergraduate Education Service—Provides grants to improve science education at predominantly minority institutions and to attract ethnic minorities, particularly women, into science and engineering careers.

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/ides/index.html>

Women's Educational Equity Act Equity Resource Center—Supports and brings additional resources to efforts to improve the education of girls and women in the United States.

<http://www2.edc.org/GDI/>

## U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Office of the Secretary—Office of Global Health Affairs: Coordinates Department's participation in meetings on women's issues sponsored by the U.N. and other international organizations.

Administration for Children and Families—Promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities through partnerships with individuals, front-line service providers, communities, American Indian tribes, Native communities, U.S. states, and the U.S. Congress; ensures services are integrated to improve access.

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/>

Food and Drug Administration—Office of Women's Health: Works to correct gender disparities in drug, device, and biologics testing and regulation policy; monitors progress of priority women's health initiatives; and partners with government and consumer groups, health advocates, professional organizations, and industry to promote women's health.

<http://www.fda.gov/womens/default.htm>

National Institutes of Health—Office of Research on Women's Health: As agency's focal point for women's health research, promotes and supports efforts to improve women's health through biomedical and behavioral research; works to develop opportunities for women in biomedical careers.

<http://www4.od.nih.gov/orwh/>

Office of Public Health and Science—Office of Women's Health: Focal point for women's health issues in the U.S. government; works to eliminate disparities in women's health status and encourage women to take personal responsibility for their health and wellness.

<http://www.4woman.gov/owh/index.htm>

## U.S. Department of Defense

Advisory Committee on Women in the Services—Provides Department with advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of highly qualified professional women in the Armed Forces.

## U.S. Department of Justice

Office on Violence Against Women—Handles Department's legal and policy issues regarding violence against women.

<http://www.usdoj.gov/trafficking.htm>

## U.S. Department of Labor

Women's Bureau—Promotes the welfare and working conditions of wage-earning women in the United States.

<http://www.dol.gov/wb/welcome.html>

Small Business Administration—Office of Women's Business Ownership: Promotes women-owned businesses through business training and technical assistance, and provides access to credit and capital, federal contracts, and international trade opportunities.

<http://www.sba.gov/financing/special/women.html>

## U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Women Veterans—Works to ensure female and male veterans have same access to benefits.

<http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>

U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of International Organization Affairs/  
Bureau of International Information Programs  
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Prepared for the 10th Anniversary  
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on the Status of Women