

Gender and Development

Peace Corps Kenya
January 2005

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Celebrate International Women's Day – March 8, 2005

How to Be a Woman, Though a Human
Sangeeta Goyal, March 2001

March 8 is observed as International Women's Day. It would seem odd that a day of the year is marked to remind us of the presence and contributions of fifty percent of the human race. But it is odder still that it has taken centuries of effort by courageous women (and men) to overcome entrenched social, cultural, economic and political barriers, in order to make visible and audible this very same presence. It may not be amiss then, to cull a day from the calendar to celebrate the slow and hard won emergence from invisibility and silence, of one half of humanity.

By way of history, in the first decade of the twentieth century, March 8 was one day in the life of women who were fighting for the right to vote. Later, this day was transformed into one of remembrance and expression of solidarity among women. A hundred years later, in the first decade of the twenty first century, much still remains to be done to attain equality of opportunity and outcome for women vis-à-vis men in every sphere of life - as caregivers, workers, educators and individuals.

These are well known probabilities: if you are a girl, rural, tribal and a poor citizen of a poor country, your chances of receiving even basic education are two out of hundred. Your urban sister fares only slightly better. If you are a mother about to give birth in a village where your only help is a traditional midwife, you can die with the same likelihood as the toss of a coin showing heads. As a worker, you are more likely to find yourself doing low-paying dead-end jobs, with less pay to take home than the man who works side-by-side with you. This is true even if you belong to the richest nation in the world. They may say that the gender gap has narrowed. You may wonder why no one sees how it persists.

Then there is violence and there is violence. Civil wars and armed conflicts affect women and girls more than they do men, though all are crimes against all of humanity. But behind the closed doors of a home too, violence occurs everyday. Count all the world's refugees and the domestically abandoned and displaced - the majority are women. The balance sheet of rights and wrongs, fairness and unfairness for women is very long.

Yet, given such tough odds, given so little room to maneuver, women continue with all their strength and resilience to uphold more than their side of the bargain. As mothers, teachers, caregivers, household heads, workers, entrepreneurs, they contribute to the productivity and reproductivity of community and society. As peace-makers and preservers of social order, they keep hope and even life alive during civil wars and other conflicts. And all over the world, from homes, fields, and factories, from NGOs and national and international

Continued as Women's Day on Page 9

The GAD committee now has a Yahoo! Group: PCKenyaGAD

The Peace Corps Kenya Gender and Development (GAD) Group is a resource for volunteers and GAD supporters to share information and ideas on gender issues, organizations, projects, activities, and events. GAD's primary objectives are: 1) Promotion of women's rights, 2) Increasing awareness of problems and issues that affect women and gender relations, and 3) Problem specific education, of both women and men, on health and social problems that touch women and families.

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Spotlight Celebrity!

Queen Nzingha of Angola (1580-1663)



One of five children of the king of Ndongo in central West Africa, Nzingha endured decades of violent invasion by Portuguese slave traders.

Some historians report that Nzingha's brother took the throne, then killed her son, and that later she poisoned her brother in revenge. Rumor had her also murdering her nephew – and eating his heart. Whatever the truth, she benefited from both deaths and grabbed power for herself, become ruler of the kingdom at age 42. Forbidding her subjects to call her queen, Nzingha took the title of king and promptly launched a war to regain her country's independence.

She proved to be the invaders' worst nightmare. She could be diplomatic or barbaric...whatever worked. She used religion as a political tool and went along with the Portuguese desire to baptize her, taking the Christian name of Anna. Later she renounced Christianity, and to gain the respect of the fiercest tribe around, she adopted cannibalism.

Nzingha was at her most ruthless in combat. Personally leading her forces into the heat of battle, she was as nimble as her much younger warriors, and she would rally forces by striking two iron bells. Making the scariest of impressions, she dressed as a man – cloaking herself with the skins of wild animals and arming herself with sword, ax, and bow and arrows. She lured her enemies farther and farther inland, gaining the advantage. She was always being cornered – and always making miraculous escapes. She never hurt the prisoners she took, and commanded her servants and soldiers not to either.

Enemies despised her for her race, sex, and relatively old age. According to the best-known legend about her, she attended a peace conference with the Portuguese preceded by her musicians and a horde of servants. The men assumed they had the upper hand – and they did have all the chairs. Nzingha recognized the oversight as an insult and turned to her attendants. One came forward immediately and dropped to his hands and knees. The queen lightly sat upon her servant's back, and with this one elegant gesture showed who was in charge. Flabbergasted by her nerve, the Portuguese signed a peace treaty on the spot.

Nzingha never married, but kept 50 or 60 young men as bodyguards. She made her favorites wear women's clothes and allowed them to move freely among the women of her household. If any displeased her, he was not seen again. Dominating the politics of the entire region for 40 years, Nzingha fought on until her death at the age of 82. Her corpse was put on formal display, dressed in royal robes encrusted with jewels, a bow and arrow clasped in her hand.

Poetry Corner

The 1st Nairobi International Poetry Festival

March 21 - 23, 2005

The theme of the festival will be "The Imagination of Poetry in the HIV/AIDS Pandemic". Poetry performances are encouraged as there will be poetry readings from renowned African poets, as well as from the rest of the world. For further information, please contact: cfg_cfg2000@yahoo.com or kibachia@yahoo.com

Poem for South African Women

By June Jordan, 1980

(Commemoration of the 40,000 women and children who, August 9, 1956, presented themselves in bodily protest against the "doppass" in the capital of apartheid)

Our own shadows disappear as the feet of thousands
by the tens of thousands pound the fallow land
into new dust that
rising like a marvelous pollen will be
fertile
even as the first woman whispering
imagination to the trees around her made
for righteous fruit
from such deliberate defense of life
as no other still
will claim inferior to any other safety
in the world

The whispers too they
intimate to the inmost ear of every spirit
now aroused they
carousing in ferocious affirmation
of all peaceable and loving amplitude
sound a certainly unbounded heat
from a baptismal smoke where yes
there will be fire

And the babies cease alarm as mothers
raising arms
and heart high as the stars so far unseen
nevertheless hurl into the universe
a moving force
irreversible as light years
traveling to the open eye

And who will join this standing up
and the ones who stood without sweet company
will sing and sing
back into the mountains and
if necessary
even under the sea:
we are the ones we have been waiting for.

Phenomenal Women

By Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies
I'm not cute or built to
suit a model's fashion size
But when I start to tell them
They think I'm telling lies.
I say
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips
The stride of my steps
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman Phenomenally
Phenomenal woman
That's me

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please
and to a man
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees
Then they swarm around me
A hive of honey bees
I say
It's the fire in my eyes
And the flash of my teeth
The swing of my waist
And the joy in my feet.
Phenomenal woman
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say
It's in the arch of my back
The sun of my smile
The ride of my breasts
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally
Phenomenal woman
That's me.

How many hours per day does the average Kenyan woman work? Kenyan man?

(Answers to all quiz questions on Page 8)

Announcements

Join the PEPFAR committee!

Have you ever wanted to toil and slave for the good of the world and still receive low wages and little appreciation? Of course you have. You joined Peace Corps, didn't you?

Applications for 2005 PEPFAR Scholarships will be out soon, and Peace Corps needs a committee of folks to make selections. With more than double the money we had last year, we'll be able to pay fees for about 1000 students.

To lighten the burden on Peace Corps this year, the selection committee will meet in Nairobi once a month from April through July to review applications. And we'll be contracting with an NGO to do the dirty work of disbursements.

An informational meeting will be held on April 14 in Nairobi for all volunteers willing to assist. Selections will begin the same day, and travel expenses will be reimbursed for committee meetings.

Contact Susan Mugwe for more information. You do not have to be a GAD member to join the committee. So please come out – we need you!

GAD Auction

In an effort to suck the volunteers dry yet again, the Gender and Development Committee plans to hold another auction for the latest SED/ED group at their upcoming IST.

IST dates are April 4-9, but may be moved to the end of March and we are still waiting for word on where it will be held. For volunteers and staff who want to attend the auction, please bring cold hard cash. We will not be accepting IOUs this time around!



WE WANT YOU!

THE GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN TO TAKE OVER THE REINS THIS COMING YEAR. ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN NAIROBI ON APRIL 15 AT 10AM. ELECTED OFFICERS WILL BE REIMBURSED FOR TRAVEL.

In 1992, what target mark did the UN set for female representation worldwide?

Which country boasts 48.8% representation by women at the national level?

Women's Day Events

An organizing committee comprised of representatives from NGOs, women's organizations, and the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture, and Social Services is planning events throughout Kenya to celebrate International Women's Day. The launch is scheduled for March 1st in Garissa District, Northeastern Province and the celebration will end in a rally on March 8 in Nairobi.

Plans are still being formulated, but the ministry expects to support exhibitions, workshops, and cultural activities on March 8. They are finalizing plans to hold events at Uhuru Park and KICC. The GAD committee will be posting any new information we receive about International Women's Day on our Yahoo Group. Please visit the website to find out the latest:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PCKenyaGAD/>

We encourage anyone interested in gender issues to sign up for the group and post your own queries or share your stories. If you have information about a women's day event being held in your area, please post it to the website or contact a GAD member!

Small Steps Toward Orgasmic Development

A response by Brian (Striper) Theroux

Note: Where clarification or correction was necessary the editor has inserted italicized comments

This article is in response to the stimulating piece "Economic Development and the Female Orgasm" by Amy Yates. The poised hypothesis stated that "a country's economic development is directly related to the number of women having orgasms," and bears many similarities to the "mini-skirts and the stock market" theory professed on Gilligan's Island.

I come to this inquiry with some obvious biases, the largest [*unconfirmed*] being of course my own penis. Other endowed biases include my passion for biochemistry and a values system that placed writing this above other chores on my "to do" list such as bathing and polishing my shoes.

Is it the number of orgasms, the number of women having them or the number of orgasms per woman that is being proposed as the link to development? Depending on the specific correlation being sought the social contexts guiding a search for results would follow divergent demographic paths. For example, if the number of orgasms is paramount, then prostitution and nymphomania must be seriously queried; while they could be footnoted if the number of women is more important. The third option opens the door to time, and as all PCVs know sometimes there is more sex (and orgasms) than at others.

Given the scarcity of data it would be premature to conclude which possibility holds the closest relationship to development. However, my large [*again, unconfirmed*] bias leads me to pursue more women having orgasms. After three years of loosening up the women at my local market to such lines of inquiry I decided to take this opportunity to gather some preliminary data to fill what Yates called the "gaping hole in research on this subject."

In an informal survey of personally acquainted mamas at the produce and matumba markets I asked the question "do you have 'enjoyable intimacy' with your husband." (I eschewed use of the O-word) Complete incomprehension was expressed by 72% of mamas. Of the 28%

registering the question, 80% responded with ecstatic laughter, compared with 9% responding with offended chuckles, 1% with shocked silence, and 10% with unreadable expressions. Of the forthright respondents 43% provided answers indicating "No" and 11% indicated "yes." A few particularly savvy ladies replied "which one?" These results are released without interpretation to more competent social scientists.

In her article Yates notes that women are more likely to have an orgasm only during intercourse. This indicates that alternative sources of climax may be considered. Americans have a reputation for oral sex, not so Africa. Masturbation is multi-cultural; although so is its conversational taboo, making data collection difficult. Phone sex may be an emerging domain, proliferated by cheap charges by the second and a deluge of Simu ya Jami's. But what of asexual means?

When a person has an orgasm, chemicals called oxytocins [*sic: oxytocins - passion for biochemistry, my ass*] flood the brain. These neuro-chemicals strengthen the bond between partners. They literally make you feel more comfortable in each others arms, more as one, more equal. The same chemicals, in varying amounts, are also released during other enjoyable activities such as sports, artistic collaboration, and (for some) religious observance.

While none of these will make you scream like Goldie Hawn [*sic: Meg Ryan*] in When Harry Met Sally (unless you win the World Series or attend the Full Gospel Church) they do proffer a chemical equivalent of sexual release and freedom. More pointedly, these are activities that can be advocated openly by volunteers in their communities. Perhaps if girls are encouraged in these activities they will end up on top, enjoying control over their bodies and lives. It's a good theory anyway.

How long does the average woman take to climax during masturbation?

How To... Celebrate International Women's Day

March 8 Is International Women's Day

Suggestions on how you can celebrate from the Dominican Republic GAD Committee

- Wear a white ribbon symbolizing women's contribution to world peace and development work.
- Show your appreciation for a woman who is important to you by doing something simple and sweet like baking her a cake or giving her flowers.
- Talk to restaurant or disco owners about the importance of the day and see if they will honor women with free stuff for the day (soda, candy, or entrance fee).
- Make use of women's groups by throwing a party or suggesting a gift exchange.
- Hold a candlelight ceremony in honor of women.
- Honor a woman in your community with an award or certificate in recognition of her work and accomplishments.
- Hold an essay, poster, or poetry contest whose theme is the importance of women.
- Organize a talk pertaining to women's issues, importance, history, or empowerment.



- Remind all community leaders (priests, teachers, mayors, etc.) to inform their groups about International Women's Day. Put up posters about the day.
- Remember to wish everyone "Happy Women's Day!"
- Hold a raffle and have the prize be a gift for the winner's mom.
- Offer to do the dishes or otherwise help women with their work.
- Help kids make gifts for their moms, sisters, grandmothers, aunts, and friends.
- Help parents make gifts for their daughters (their favorite meal, a card, flowers).
- Arrange serenades for special women.
- Organize sports activities for girls and women.
- **SAY THANK YOU!**

c/o Angel Ripol,
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Gender Issues in the News

Taking the Men On Board [African Woman and Child Feature Service](#) (Nairobi)

December 1, 2004
Isaiah Kipyegon
Nairobi

For a long time now, gender issues have been regarded as women's issues, ignoring the very important fact that they involve men and women, boys and girls in society. Consequently, the struggle for gender equality and the battle against gender based violence has been seen as the call for women alone.

A recent positive trend however has seen a number of men and men's organisations joining in the call for gender equality, fighting violence against women and generally seeking to safeguard the human rights of women. One of the reasons for this trend is the realisation by men that they stand to lose out despite the favoured status they enjoy in the culture of patriarchy. There are no winners when half of society represented by wives, mothers, daughters and sisters continue to bear the yoke of discrimination and the violation of their fundamental rights.

In a paper presented at a UN Experts Group Meeting on the role of men and boys in gender equality, Njoki Wainaina the coordinator of men's the project at the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) said that increasingly, men have become aware that they are beneficiaries of an unfair and untenable system in which everybody eventually becomes a loser.

She says that the advancement of the movement for gender equality has changed men's lives and their environment. The participation of men in fighting gender based violence is crucial because of their positions of power in the home and community.

Men to Men is one of the initiatives mobilising men to support gender equality. The long term goal of this initiative is to create a movement of men in Africa who support gender equality. It

builds on themes that touch on eliminating violence against women, men in the fight against HIV/AIDS and men in reproductive health among others. These are themes that women have been working on for a long time now.

During this year's 16 Days of Activism on Gender Based Violence, Men to Men have been involved in the Men's Travelling Conference, whose aim is to mobilise men to believe in and support gender equality. Their campaigns have covered many regions throughout the country, particularly western, central and the coast.

According to FEMNET men's campaigns against gender based violence are hampered by the lack of involvement of men in combating gender based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS, persistent harmful cultural practices, limited conception of gender and gender based violence, limited knowledge on legislation among others.

The chairperson of Men to Men, Daniel Mbeka, says that the weaknesses in society are manifest when women are left to tackle issues of gender inequalities on their own.

"Men must work with women on gender issues, because these issues are crucial to our development," says Mbeka.

One of the reasons why men should be involved in fighting gender based violence and advocating for equality is the fact that they represent a greater majority of the perpetrators, while on the other hand women are often the victims and survivors.

The challenge however is bringing all men aboard. According to Mbeka, a lot of effort is needed to bring men into a dialogue and ultimately to commit themselves to protect the rights of women and desist from discriminatory cultures and practices.

In other parts world, such as Europe and America, where gender equality is higher in many spheres of life, men have played a key role in achieving this reality. In such countries, there is some level of gender parity in parliament and other institutions. There are also a number of movements for men against discrimination and abuse of women and girls.

Complicating further the issue of gender based violence is HIV/AIDS.

Research shows that gender based violence, particularly sexual violence, is one of the leading causes of the spread of the disease.

In an environment where culture and nurture has denied women the right to negotiate safe sex, demand monogamy, or even protect themselves from forced encounters, the participation of men becomes essential.

In 1992, what percentage of Kenyan women were living in a polygamous marriage?

Men in Kenya and in Africa still wield the power of resources, decision making, and access to leadership positions in governments and other spheres. It only makes sense to demand their participation in the battle against gender based violence.

What you as a Man can do to prevent Gender Violence*

1. Approach gender violence as a MEN'S issue involving men of all ages, socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. View men not only as perpetrators or possible offenders, but as empowered bystanders who can confront abusive peers.

2. If a brother, friend, classmate, or teammate is abusing his female partner - or is disrespectful or abusive to girls and women in general - don't look the other way. If you feel comfortable doing so,

try to confront him about it. Urge him to seek help. Or if you don't know what to do, consult a friend, a parent, a professor, the authorities or a counselor. **DON'T REMAIN SILENT.**

3. Have the courage to look inward. Question your own attitudes. Don't be defensive when something you do or say ends up hurting someone else.

Try hard to understand how your own attitudes and actions might inadvertently perpetuate sexism and violence, and work toward changing them.

4. If you suspect that a woman close to you is being abused or has been sexually assaulted, gently ask if you can help. If she is not comfortable talking to you, refer her to appropriate help.

5. If you are emotionally, psychologically, physically, or sexually abusive to women, or have been in the past, seek professional help NOW.

6. Be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence. Support the work of campus-based women's centers. Attend rallies and other public events. Raise money for

community-based rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters. If you belong to a team or fraternity, or another student group, organize a fundraiser.

7. Attend programs, take courses, watch films, and read articles and books about multicultural masculinities, gender inequality, and the root causes of gender violence. Educate yourself and others about how larger social forces affect the conflicts between individual men and women.

8. Don't fund sexism. Refuse to purchase any magazine, rent any video, subscribe to any Web site, or buy any music that portrays girls or women in a sexually degrading or abusive manner. Protest sexism in the media.

9. Mentor and teach young boys about how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women. volunteer to work with gender violence prevention programs, including anti-sexist men's programs. Lead by example.

At what age does the average Canadian give birth for the first time?

International Women's Day - 2004



A prisoner models a Samburu traditional outfit, as inmates watch a fashion show during International Women's Day at the Langata Women's Prison in Nairobi, March 8, 2004. Prisoners, dressed in traditional and contemporary outfits, sashayed across a courtyard at a women's prison as rock music played in the background and scores of fellow inmates clapped and cheered.

Which country's federally funded sex education program has taught students that condoms fail as often as 31% of the time?

Gender Quiz Answers

1. How many hours per day does the average Kenyan woman work? Kenyan man?
Answer: Women in Kenya work an average of 676 minutes per day, second only to Guatemala. Men work 35% fewer hours – 500 minutes.
2. In 1992, what target mark did the UN set for female representation worldwide?
Answer: 30% representation by women, generally considered to be the "critical mass for effective representation"
3. Which country boasts 48.8% representation by women at the national level?
Answer: Rwanda! That's right – in 2003 Rwanda surpassed Sweden (with 45% representation in parliament). Its new constitution mandates that 30% of seats be reserved for women. The rest were elected with the help of political party quotas.
4. How long does the average woman take to climax during masturbation?
Answer: 4 minutes, according to Kinsey. It takes 10-20 minutes during intercourse.
5. In 1992, what percentage of Kenyan women were living in a polygamous marriage?
Answer: 23%
6. Which country's federally funded sex education program has taught students that condoms fail as often as 31% of the time?
Answer: The United States, according to a congressional staff analysis of abstinence-only programs
7. At what age does the average Canadian give birth for the first time?
Answer: 29.9 years

Sources: www.quotaproject.org, www.nationmaster.com, www.focusintl.com, www.sexualrecords.com, www.washingtonpost.com



Women's Day
(continued from page 1)

fora, and as academics, activists and politicians, women continue to struggle for their right to be recognized as the other equal half of humanity.

A historian in describing the status of women called them those who could not say no. A poet in his divine use of words exhorted that where women are worshipped, there gods reside. It is not a pedestal nor deification that women have fought for. Their struggle has always been for the right to say yes. But the poet was not altogether off the mark - presumably he saw how giving women their rightful equal status would lead to the greater well-being of everyone - not only as a matter of law (which is important) but in material resources, in education, in right to land and property; and in the ending of discrimination and disregard, and in helping them harness their productive and creative selves as much as men, all of society would prosper. It is proper then that there is a day which we call women's day. It would be better still to not let it be just one day.



A BONUS POEM
(because the editor forgot to get the cartoons)

Helen of Troy Does Countertop Dancing
Margaret Atwood

The world is full of women
who'd tell me I should be ashamed of myself
if they had the chance. Quit dancing.
Get some self-respect
and a day job.
Right. And minimum wage,
and varicose veins, just standing
in one place for eight hours
behind a glass counter
bundled up to the neck, instead of
naked as a meat sandwich.
Selling gloves, or something.
Instead of what I do sell.
You have to have talent
to peddle a thing so nebulous
and without material form.
Exploited, they'd say. Yes, any way
you cut it, but I've a choice
of how, and I'll take the money.

I do give value.
Like preachers, I sell vision,
like perfume ads, desire
or its facsimile. Like jokes
or war, it's all in the timing.
I sell men back their worse suspicions:
that everything's for sale,
and piecemeal. They gaze at me and see

a chain-saw murder just before it happens,
when thigh, ass, inkblot, crevice, tit, and
nipple
are still connected.
Such hatred leaps in them,
my beery worshippers! That, or a bleary
hopeless love. Seeing the rows of heads
and upturned eyes, imploring
but ready to snap at my ankles,
I understand floods and earthquakes, and
the urge
to step on ants. I keep the beat,
and dance for them because
they can't. The music smells like foxes,
crisp as heated metal
searing the nostrils
or humid as August, hazy and languorous
as a looted city the day after,
when all the rape's been done
already, and the killing,
and the survivors wander around
looking for garbage
to eat, and there's only a bleak exhaustion.
Speaking of which, it's the smiling
tires me out the most.
This, and the pretence
that I can't hear them.
And I can't, because I'm after all
a foreigner to them.
The speech here is all warty gutturals,
obvious as a slab of ham,

but I come from the province of the gods
where meanings are liting and oblique.
I don't let on to everyone,
but lean close, and I'll whisper:
My mother was raped by a holy swan.
You believe that? You can take me out to
dinner.
That's what we tell all the husbands.
There sure are a lot of dangerous birds
around.

Not that anyone here
but you would understand.
The rest of them would like to watch me
and feel nothing. Reduce me to components
as in a clock factory or abattoir.
Crush out the mystery.
Wall me up alive
in my own body.
They'd like to see through me,
but nothing is more opaque
than absolute transparency.
Look--my feet don't hit the marble!
Like breath or a balloon, I'm rising,
I hover six inches in the air
in my blazing swan-egg of light.
You think I'm not a goddess?
Try me.
This is a torch song.
Touch me and you'll burn.