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Women and Power: Stories From Around the Globe

*"Today's real borders are not between nations, but between powerful and powerless, free and fettered, privileged and humiliated."*¹

United Nation Secretary General Kofi Annan

Disenfranchised groups--those not allowed access to critical resources--have little access to power. In many countries, women represent one of these disenfranchised groups. Women around the world are disproportionately denied access to employment, education, and religious freedoms. Many traditional routes to business funding, collective action, and social welfare are blocked to women. Legal rights for women in many countries are inferior to those of men, and women are poorly represented in political positions around the globe. But inroads to equality are being made on new, innovative paths, and even mainstream approaches to accessing critical resources became more gender neutral during the late 20th century.

In the vignettes below, we explore some of the ways in which gender is played out in the struggle for power and control. After the vignettes, we present statistics of the broader issue discussed in the vignette. The vignettes and statistics are meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Employment

Of all the industrialized nations in the world, Japan has the sharpest drop-off rate of women leaving their jobs after marriage. Due to the Japanese tradition of lifetime employment with one company, women who try to re-enter the work force after marrying or having children often cannot find anything other than unskilled, low paying, part time jobs.² Kumi Sato, former- CEO of family

¹ United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, accepting the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10, 2001, as quoted in Sarah Lyall, "In Nobel Talk, Annan Sees Each Human Life as the Prize," *The New York Times* (December 11, 2001): A3.

² Eiko Shinotsuka, "Working Women in Japan," *Video Letter from Japan II: The Early Working Years* (1989): 19-22. Accessed online on 3/2/02 at www.askasia.org/frclasrm/readings/r000074.htm.

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owned Cosmo Public Relations in Japan, found, while hiring positions for her company, that women candidates had the “smarts but not the knowledge of business to succeed.”³ Sato, born in Japan and schooled and professionally trained in the US (she worked as a consultant for McKinsey in New York), realized that this trend applied to women in Japan on a whole: “Eighty-five percent of Japanese women are college graduates, yet so many have no idea of their options in either their careers or their personal lives. The networking and mentoring resources that many American women have just don’t exist here.” (See **Exhibit 1** for a table on female attitudes towards employment in Japan.)

To address the lack of networking opportunities, female role models, and formal business training for Japanese women, Sato founded womenjapan.com. The website offers career counseling and advice on topics such as finding employment, how to quit a job, and investing. The site also offers more traditional ‘women content’ such as fashion, health and beauty issues. Sato states,

Part of our role is to mentor Japanese women. They can come to us, find the answers and, we hope, apply them to their lives. Our users have consistently shown us they want work skills. We’ve focused a lot of content in that area. “Here’s how to get computer skills, this is what’s necessary to be a translator,” et cetera. If we don’t offer them solutions, people are not going to come back. Entertainment is important, and we incorporate it into the site, but fashion tips can only take you so far in life.⁴

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- On the whole, women have less social protection and employment rights than do men.⁵ In 2000, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights determined that the Guatemalan Civil Code, which had given male spouses authority to deny their wives the right to work outside the home when the activities “prejudice[d] the interests and care of the children or other attentions in the home,” violated the American Convention on Human Rights.⁶
- Worldwide, women remain at the lower end of a segregated labor market and continue to be concentrated in a small number of occupations, to hold positions of little or no authority, and to receive less pay than men.⁷
 - Worldwide, women earn 75 percent of men’s pay.⁸
 - Sixty-six percent of women’s work (childcare, household, agricultural) is unpaid.⁹

³ Mark L. Clifford and Sheri Prasso, “The Stars of Asia,” *Business Week Online* (July 3, 2000). Accessed online on 3/2/02 at www.businessweek.com/2000/00_27/b3688009.htm.

⁴ Gail Nakada, “Breaking Through: 8 Japanese Women Netpreneurs, Kumi Sato, President WomenJapan.com,” *Japan.inc*, (April 2000). Accessed online on 3/2/02 at www.japaninc.net/mag/comp/2000/04/print/apr00p_sato.html.

⁵ UNIFEM, “Progress of the World’s Women 2000,” accessed online at www.unifem.undp.org/progressww/index.html.

⁶ Human Rights Watch, *From the Household to the Factory: Sex Discrimination in the Guatemalan Labor Force* (January 2002). Accessed online on 2/21/02 at http://hrw.org/reports/2002/guat/P611_125772.

⁷ *The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, United Nations Statistics Division, accessed online at www.un.org/Depts/unsd/ww2000/work2000.htm.

⁸ “Facts About Working Women,” AFL-CIO, accessed online at www.aflcio.org/women/wwfacts.htm.

⁹ *Ibid.*

- Around the world, women are more prevalent than men in entry-level and in low-wage, unskilled jobs.¹⁰
- The wage gap has lessened in most regions between the mid 1980s to the late 1990s (with the exception of parts of Eastern Europe). The quality of employment, however, has not increased in the same way for men and women. In fact, the quality of women's jobs may even have deteriorated.¹¹
- Women account for 70 percent of the world's population living in abject poverty (living on less than \$1 a day).¹²
- There are only five women Chief Executive Officers of *Fortune 500* companies in the U.S.¹³

Education

El Salvador, a country that has been torn apart by years corruption and civil war, is trying to modernize during the recent peaceful times. Most of the government's reforms, however, do not address the problems facing the majority of the population, rural peasant farmers, or women. In fact, according to resistance movement activist Marina Diaz Flores, the government's economic plans are adversely affecting women and youth.

The government doesn't take any interest in the development of the peasant farmer, in women's further economic development, or that of youth, or culture, and so forth. [Its] economic plan calls for the privatization of the unions, of the different government institutions, in order to have them under its control. [...But] if [the schools] are privatized, in the private schools you have to pay a heap of money. How will they pay this heap of money if there isn't work to be had? How will women be able to develop themselves further if there isn't adequate education?¹⁴

Through the resistance movement group the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), Marina Diaz Flores works to address the needs, primarily education, of women in her country. In 1994, Marina Diaz Flores was elected, along with three other women, to the municipal council in Tecoluca, San Vicente, El Salvador. These elections were the first after a 12-year civil war, and the first elections ever that FMLN were allowed to participate in as a legal party. Mother of four, "Marina Diaz Flores works unpaid three days a week as municipal councilor, coordinator for women's organizing in the area, and coordinator for basic education projects. The other four days of the week she tends a plot of land to support her family."¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ United Nations, *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, (United Nations Publications, 2000), pp. 131-32.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Sample statistics of *Women in History* chart," accessed online on 2/21/02 at www.synchronopedia.com/samplepercent20WIHpercent20stats.htm.

¹⁴ Judy Goldberger, "Building a Movement in El Salvador from the Grassroots up," *Sojourner: The Women's Forum* (July 31, 1995): 13.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Literacy, Marina believes, is a necessary step to improve a woman's quality of life and protect her human rights. In El Salvador, more than 76 percent of women are illiterate.

[We have established] programs where women come to gain literacy. Since women have been working on learning to read and write, they're also working on learning what gender is, so that they can know to value themselves, and so that they fight for what their values are. [...] To help [a woman] to recognize herself as more capable, to know her rights and fight for her rights to be respected and to be taken into account as a woman [...] and that she has values, the same values that a man has.¹⁶

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- In 1996-1997, 36.7 percent of the female population in El Salvador was enrolled in secondary education.¹⁷

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- Two-thirds of the world's 876 million illiterates are women.¹⁸
- As of 2000, 11 percent of countries worldwide had achieved gender equality in secondary education enrollment. However, the level of female enrollment in secondary education deteriorated in much of Sub-Saharan Africa (11 out of 33 countries), Central and Western Asia (seven out of 11 countries), Latin America and the Caribbean (six out of 26 countries), and Eastern Europe (six out of nine countries).¹⁹

Religion

Although Buddha proclaimed, "the path to liberation is open to both men and women,"²⁰ women are not allowed to be fully ordained as Buddhist monks in eight of the 12 countries where Buddhism is most prevalent.²¹ In Thailand, where gender discrimination in religion extends to prohibiting girls from attending religious schools, usually the "only form of education for impoverished children," Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh is working to open Buddhism to women. An Associate Professor of Philosophy at Thammasat University in Bangkok, Chatsumarn left her husband and family in early 2001 and traveled to Sri Lanka, where women can be ordained as monks. Once ordained, Chatsumarn returned to Bangkok to form a female religious community to help give other women access to Buddhism and make changes in society as a whole.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Net enrolment data is based on tabulations prepared by UNESCO for the Human Development Report Office, Human Development Report (1999): 229-32.

¹⁸ *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, United Nations Statistics Division, accessed online at www.un.org/Depts/unsd/ww2000/edu2000.htm.

¹⁹ Jennifer Hahn, Roberta Sklar, and Lillian Awidi, "International Status Report: Only 9 Nations Close Gender Gap in Legislatures and Education," *Progress of the World's Women 2000* (May 23, 2000). Accessed online on 2/28/02 at www.unifem.undp.org/progressww/pr_progress.html.

²⁰ "Unenlightened," *The Economist*, (November 10, 2001) Asia section.

²¹ Burma, Cambodia, China, Japan, Korea, Laos, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Tibet & the Himalayas, and Vietnam.

The ordination of women, according to Chatsumarn, is consistent with Buddhism dogma: “the Buddha was the first religious leader who came forward to say that women are equal to men in their spiritual potentiality. As Buddhists, we should take this opportunity to express this potentiality as its best. [...] For the full participation of women in the religious field, we should provide them with the spiritual space so that they can express themselves equally to men.”²² According to Chatsumarn, ordination is just a means to an end in improving not only the status and lives of women, but society as a whole:

We are living in a world full of crisis. [...] When we have so many crises facing us, how can we say: “You are a woman, don’t do that, it’s only for men.” Why can’t men and women help each other so that we can have a better society, live in a better world, and enter the new century in a better fashion.²³

Ordained status gives women a “field of merit,” and allows her to “engage herself in doing many good works for society, like teaching, preaching for women, and so on.”²⁴

Chatsumarn’s work to spiritualize Thai women has met with great resistance from both the religious community and Thai society as a whole. The abbot at Bangkok’s main Buddhist temple vocally denounces Chatsumarn’s endeavor, stating that ordaining women would weaken Buddhism, “since female monks could be attacked and raped.”²⁵ Moderates suggest that women be ordained as *mae chis*, or nuns, a profession, however, that Thai society looks down upon. Because of the harsh critics, Chatsumarn works from a grassroots level. “I realize that women in my country are not ready yet for ordination because they are not prepared. [Once we educate and train them] we will go to the next step.”²⁶

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- China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea and more recently Tibet and Sri Lanka are the only countries that allow the full ordination of women as Buddhist monks.²⁷

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- The Roman Catholic Church “holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include: the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the

²² Monte Leach, “Helping the Daughters of Buddha: An Interview with Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh,” *Share International*, (December 1994). Accessed online on 2/28/02 at http://www.shareintl.org/archives/social-justice/sj_mlhelping.htm.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Unenlightened,” *The Economist* (November 10, 2001), Asia section.

²⁶ Monte Leach, “Helping the Daughters of Buddha: An Interview with Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh,” *Share International*, December 1994, accessed online on 2/28/02 at http://www.shareintl.org/archives/social-justice/sj_mlhelping.htm.

²⁷ Women Active in Buddhism, “Resources on women’s ordination,” accessed online on 3/4/02 at <http://members.tripod.com/~Lhamo/4ordin.htm>.

priesthood is in accordance with God's plan for his Church."²⁸ As of early 2002, the Roman Catholic Church does not allow women to become priests or deaconesses.²⁹

- In 1992 the Church of England approved the ordination of women. By 2001, approximately 20 percent of ordained clergy in the Church of England were women.³⁰
- Women can be ordained as rabbis in Reform Judaism, but not in Orthodox Judaism.
- Women account for 10 percent of the clergy in Protestant denominations in the U.S.³¹

Funding

Hagit Glickman, a California-based clinical psychologist, had an idea for an online service that would link mental-health-care providers with their patients. Glickman, who had 10 years of experience in the managed-care sector, drew up a business plan and approached several venture capitalists for startup funding. Instead of receiving funding or support, Glickman was patronized and turned away by the firms:

[The] message I got was, "There, there, honey." Here I am, a professional woman, a recognized expert in my field. I go into meetings with potential business partners, venture capitalists, angel investors, and all I hear is, "This is a really sweet, cute little idea. But it will never go anywhere."

In her search for capital, Glickman came across the Women's Technology Cluster, an incubator based in San Francisco. With the help of the Cluster, she secured \$1 million in funding from Hemisphere Healthcare, Inc., for her website MyPsyche.com, and for the first time, had investors cold-calling her: "That's directly a result of momentum generated by the Cluster," Glickman asserted.

Incubators like Cluster, as well as women-only venture capitalist firms and angel groups, have helped women secure more than twice as much venture funding in 2000 as women entrepreneurs did in 1996. At the Cluster's one-year anniversary party in March 2000, Hillary Rodham Clinton named the phenomenon "the new-girl network."³²

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²⁸ From a letter to the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury from Pope Paul VI in 1975, outlining the Roman Catholic Church's stand on female ordination.

²⁹ B.A. Robinson, "The Roman Catholic Church and the Ordination of Women," *ReligiousTolerance.org*. Accessed online on 3/4/03 at www.religioustolerance.org/femclrg1.htm.

³⁰ Bruce A. Robinson, "Women Priests in the Anglican Community," *ReligiousTolerance.org*. Accessed online on 3/4/02 at www.religioustolerance.org/femclrg3.htm.

³¹ Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis, Patricia Mei Yin Chang, "A Brief Description of Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling" *Hartford Institute for Religion Research*. Accessed online on 3/4/02 at http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/clergywomen_descrip.html.

³² All of the above information taken from D.M. Osborne, "A Network of Her Own," *Inc. Magazine* (September 2000). Accessed online at www.inc.com.

- In the U.S. in 2000, women owned 38 percent of all businesses.³³
- The U.S. Small Business Administration reported that revenue growth in start-ups owned by women was twice the growth in those headed by men.³⁴ In spite of this, women received less than five percent of venture capital money available in 2000.³⁵

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- ACCION International is a nonprofit firm that fights poverty through microlending. Forty-five percent of ACCION USA's clients are female.³⁶ Over 61 percent of ACCION Latin America clients and 73 percent of ACCION Africa's clients are women.

Collective Action

Ela Bhatt, born in 1933 and trained as a lawyer and social worker, became the chief of the women's section of the Textile Labour Association in Ahmedabad, India in 1968. In this position, Bhatt saw firsthand the difficulties self-employed women faced in India and Southeast Asia. These women—weavers, cigarette rollers, produce vendors, etc.—were routinely harassed and exploited by moneylenders, authorities and employers. In Ahmedabad, 97 percent of self-employed women lived in slums, and 93 percent were illiterate. According to Bhatt, these women worked for 50 cents a day, and “the government [didn't] even recognize them. They [were] unaccounted for, unprotected and without access to training, health care.”

In 1972, Bhatt founded the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) to help women “who earn a living through their own labour or small business, [who] do not obtain regular salaried employment with welfare benefits like workers in the organized sector.”³⁷ Within three years SEWA had 7,000 members and was officially registered as a trade union with the government. By 1995, SEWA had become the largest trade union in India. SEWA helped self-employed women establish health and maternity benefits, form cooperatives, and set up training sessions. “We fought for the bread and butter issues—minimum wage, welfare, social security, additional work,” stated Bhatt.

In 1974, SEWA established its own bank, helping thousands of women become independent from their moneylenders. The bank also enabled women to accumulate land, assets and means of production. By the mid-1990s, the bank, which began with \$30,000, was operating on a working capital of \$3 million.

Bhatt stated, “Injustices existed at every level--direct exploitation, government corruption. Through direct action, meeting with politicians and filing complaints, we sought to bring about changes in the policies and laws.”³⁸

³³ Women's Business Ownership, U.S. Small Business Administration, accessed online at <http://www.sba.gov/womeninbusiness/welcome.html>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ ACCION data accessed online at www.accion.org/programs/main.asp.

³⁷ Self Employed Women's Association, “About Us,” accessed online on 3/4/02 at www.sewa.org/annualreport/index.htm.

³⁸ All above information, except where noted, from “Ela Bhatt, Self Employed Women's Association (1984)” accessed online on 3/4/02 at www.rightlivelivelihood.se/recipe1984_2.html.

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- In 1994³⁹, India had a labor force of 385.5 million. Only nine percent of the workforce was unionized and women represented only 21 percent of the unions submitting returns for that year (6,277 of 56,872 total registered unions).⁴⁰

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- In Kenya in 1993, women, frustrated by their lack of voice in COTU (the national collective bargaining body in Kenya), founded KEWWO: an independent organization designed to facilitate research, planning, and action supporting collective bargaining for women. As KEWWO's National Chairperson Sarah Chitavi stated: "We want enlightenment so that we can join in decision-making bodies. We want to be secretary-generals of trade unions. We want to enter the world of big business and not be restricted to selling peanuts and ice water..."⁴¹
- In South Africa in 1995, women represented 29 percent of union membership. However, most of women's jobs in South Africa are un-unionized, informal occupations. In formal sector jobs, 32 percent of women, "compared to 37 percent of men, belong to a trade union [... making] the chances of a woman joining a trade union much the same as a man, for a given class of employment."⁴²
- In 2001, 15.1 percent of employed males and 11.7 percent of employed females in the U.S. were paying members of a union.
- A 1999 study of women involved in trade unionism in Namibia concluded that women participated in unions at "very low levels . . . mainly because of: a lack of child-care; time-consuming domestic responsibilities; restraints imposed by husbands and boyfriends; and women's lack of confidence in their own abilities."⁴³
- The percentage of women delegates to the annual Congress of the (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) doubled (from 10 to 20 percent) between 1983 and 1992. But the international body concluded that "despite the progress made in the struggle for gender parity in the trade unions, women are still under-represented in decision-making posts, decision-making bodies, activities and congresses."⁴⁴

³⁹ Most recent data available.

⁴⁰ "Indian Labor Market Trends and Macroeconomic Analysis (December 2000 Report)," submitted by SARDI, accessed online at www.globalpolicynetwork.org/data/india/india-analysis.pdf.

⁴¹ Krishno Dey and David Westendorff (eds.), "KEWWO: The Kenya Women Workers Organization, Nairobi," *UNSRID*, Accessed online on 4/3/02 at <http://www.unrisd.org/engindex/publ/list/dp/dp79/their211.htm>.

⁴² NALEDI, "Highlights of Current Labor Market Conditions in South Africa," *Globalpolicynetwork.org*, accessed online at www.globalpolicynetwork.org/data/southafrica/south-africa-analysis.pdf.

⁴³ Herbert Jauch, "The National Union of Namibian Workers and the Quest for Gender Equality," paper presented at the first NUNW National Women's Conference, 23 September 2000. Available online at www.larri.com.na/Workshop_Papers

⁴⁴ Data and quotes from the ICFTU website at www.icftu.org

Reproductive Health

Eka Esu-Williams was born in Nigeria in 1950, the third of eight children. Her parents stressed the importance of education for both boys and girls, and supported Esu-Williams' decision to attend the University of Nigeria. She then went on to the University of London, where she received a Ph.D. in Immunology. She returned to Nigeria in 1985 and accepted a teaching position at the University of Calabar. After being passed over for a promotion because she was a woman, Esu-Williams decided to leave the University and put her immunology training to practical use. In 1988, she founded the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAA), "a Pan Africa women's network which provides a platform for African women to take action to address the threats and consequences of HIV/AIDS on their lives, the lives of their family members, and communities."⁴⁵

Much of SWAA's work is educational, with the goal of reducing the spread of HIV by teaching young women—especially those in the sex industry—about reproductive health and safe sex practices. Many traditional African practices, such as polygamy, greatly contribute to the spread of HIV. SWAA works to educate both men and women about harmful cultural practices, as well as to encourage dialogue between men and women about sexual matters. SWAA also holds workshops that teach women about self-esteem, and how to be in better control of their own lives.

Esu-Williams states,

The more we keep issues of AIDS under the cover, the more difficult it will be dealing with the disease, until it is too late. We need to talk about why this [disease] affects all of us. People will say, "Oh, that has to do with prostitutes. It has nothing to do with us." We need to talk about why men and women see things differently, why they respond differently, and how we can reduce those lines of division so that people are at the same starting point.⁴⁶

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- From 1995 to 2015, it is estimated that more people will die of AIDS in Nigeria than in any other African county, except South Africa and Kenya.⁴⁷ Of an estimated 2.7 million people that are HIV positive in Nigeria, women account for 54 percent.⁴⁸

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- According to the World Bank, one-third of illness in women ages 15-44 in developing countries is related to pregnancy, childbirth, abortion, reproductive tract infections, HIV and AIDS.⁴⁹
- An estimated 1,600 women die every day from complications caused by pregnancy and childbirth. Ninety-nine percent of these women live in developing countries.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ From Eka Esu-Williams' CV, accessed online at <http://www.mh-hannover.de/aktuelles/projekte/mmm/globaldialogue/docs/Esu-Williams-CV.pdf>.

⁴⁶ All information above, unless otherwise noted, taken from Kathleen McFadden, "Women's Stories: African AIDS Fighter Eka Esu-Williams (1950-)," accessed online at www.writetools.com/women/stories/esu-williams_eka.html.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ The Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, Nigeria, accessed online at www.crlp.org/ww_sbr_nigeria.html.

⁴⁹ "The Right to Reproductive and Sexual Health," United Nations, Published by the United Nations Department of Public Information--DPI/1877--February 1997. Accessed online at www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/womrepro.htm.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

- In 1996, the percentage of women who delivered their babies in health facilities in Northern Africa was 57 percent, in sub-Saharan Africa was 37 percent, in Southern Asia was 28 percent, and in South-eastern Asia was 52 percent. The percentage of women who were attended by a skilled person during delivery in Northern Africa was 66 percent, in sub-Saharan Africa was 42 percent, in Southern Asia was 39 percent, and in South-eastern Asia was 64 percent.⁵¹
- In China, women bear the “brunt of the fertility control policy.” After their first child, Chinese women receive an IUD. After their second, women are sterilized, “without any discussion of side effects, risks, or personal medical history or preference.”⁵²

Legal rights

On the day he died, Edna Mahureva Harare, Zimbabwe lost not only her husband, but the house they had built together: Zimbabwean law does not recognize women’s right to own property. “I built this house with my husband. I worked in the field for years to buy the bricks. Then I carried the bricks on my head from eight kilometers away, 12 at a time, and 1,000 in all.... I raised eight children here,” Mahureva stated. Because her husband had not drawn up a will, the house automatically went to the eldest son. Mahureva’s son immediately sold the house. Mahureva refused to leave, was arrested by riot police for resisting eviction, and put in a maximum-security jail for three months.

After Mahureva’s arrest, her family called Rita Makarau, a prominent women’s rights lawyer. “You can’t tell me the son has a higher right to own that house, to sell it out from under his mother and pocket the money—simply because he is a man,” stated Makarau. Makarau, one of only 50 practicing female lawyers in Zimbabwe, took the case knowing that she would lose, which she did. “The judgments are technically correct. The problem is that customary law is just loaded with discrimination against females.”

Mahureva served her three-month sentence, and with Makarau, continues to fight for the return of her home. A non-profit group called HelpAge is helping Mahureva raise money to buy out the current owners of her home, and Mahureva vows, “I will not stop fighting for it. Never.”⁵³

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- In Zimbabwe, women have no right to inherit property, receive a fair share in a divorce settlement, or refuse to have sex with their husband.⁵⁴
- Other deeply rooted Zimbabwe traditions include pledging a young woman to marriage with a partner not of her choosing; the custom of forcing a widow to marry her late husband's

⁵¹ United Nations, *The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations Publications, 2000) p. 61.

⁵² Joan Kaufman, “Organizing Women,” *Radcliff Quarterly, Changing China*, (Winter 2002): 14.

⁵³ All information above from Corinna Schuler, “For African Women, Rights Come Slowly,” *Christian Science Monitor* (March 9, 2000). Accessed online on 3/4/02 at www.csmonitor.com/durable/2000/03/09/p1s4.htm.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

brother; and the custom of offering a young girl as compensatory payment in interfamily disputes.⁵⁵

- In Zimbabwe, culture and religion generally accept and promote polygamy and marrying of girls at young ages.⁵⁶

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- In some countries, laws are based on a traditional interpretation of religious text. In most of these countries, women are subject to disadvantages and inequality in all aspects of life. Public places, including schools, universities, and the workplace, are gender segregated in Saudi Arabia. In addition, women have “unequal legal status with men in matters relating to marriage, divorce, and child custody, [...] do not enjoy freedom of movement, are not permitted to drive, and lack equal rights with men with respect to transmission of their nationality to their children.” Saudi women have no means of public discussion for rights: Saudi Arabia does not have any women's rights organizations, nor are there any women on the Consultative Council, the advisory body to the government.⁵⁷
- In Scotland, only women who are married to their abusers receive protection from the law; when the couple is not married, Scottish law “provides no protection for the woman on the receiving end of violence, other than to permit him to be cautioned by the police.” Married women can obtain an interim interdict enforceable by arrest. Assault by a completely unknown man is punishable with jail time.⁵⁸
- On January 7, 2001, Senegalese women were given equal property rights with men for the first time.⁵⁹

Politics

On December 3, 1990, Mary Robinson was inaugurated as the first female President of Ireland. Dubbed by the Irish press “the most popular head of state in the world,”⁶⁰ Robinson focused much of her efforts while president on promoting women's rights in Ireland.

Robinson's parents, both doctors, raised her and her four brothers on equal terms. Robinson states,

⁵⁵ AFROL Gender Profiles: Zimbabwe, accessed online at www.afrol.com/Categories/Women/profiles/zimbabwe_women.htm.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights in Saudi Arabia: A Deafening Silence,” (December 2001). Accessed online on 2/21/02 at <http://hrw.org/backgrounders/mena/saudi>.

⁵⁸ “Women Who Get Short Shrift from the Law,” *Europe Intelligence Wire* (May 26, 1999).

⁵⁹ “Senegal's Voyage to Development,” *The Economist* (January 13, 2001)..

⁶⁰ BBC Report, “Women in Power Reveal What it Takes: Mary Robinson,” www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/wiwp/dyncon/rob.shtml#, 3/4/02.

Although I was the only girl I never had any sense that I was different or there was a limit on what I might do or achieve. [...] And although there wasn't much discussion of equality, it was implicitly there, and I had more confidence as a teenager and as a female youngster in those days than I think a lot of my contemporaries.⁶¹

Education was equally encouraged for all siblings. Robinson received a Master's of Art from Trinity College, Dublin and went on to earn a Barrister-at-Law degree from the King's Inn, Dublin, and a Master of Law degree from Harvard University. Returning to Ireland, she practiced law and accepted a post as a Lecturer at Trinity College.

Robinson, having spent time in the U.S. in the 1960s, was very interested in the women's movement. Although the women's movement in Ireland was still very new, Robinson began working to legalize the availability of contraceptives. She knew that her fight would be unpopular, but was willing to sacrifice her political future for what she believed in. "I didn't set myself the goal of being President of Ireland," laughed Robinson. "I was very surprised when I was approached by the Labour Party [...] and asked would I be their nominee and would I be prepared to go forward."⁶² Robinson says of her win at the polls, "I was elected by the women of Ireland, who instead of rocking the cradle, rocked the system."⁶³

Robinson left the Presidency in 1997 to become the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, but will be remembered as "the most successful [President] in the history of the State."⁶⁴

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- Ireland is 59th out of 179 countries ranked in descending order by the percentage of women in national parliaments.⁶⁵
- Two out of Ireland's eight presidents have been women.

* * * * *

- Currently, women head only 11 of over 180 countries.⁶⁶
- In 1995, Sweden became the first country to have an equal number of men and women in ministerial posts.⁶⁷ In 1999, Sweden became the first country to have more female ministers than male.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ John Horgan, "Mary Robinson: Book Review," *O'Brien Press Titles*. Accessed online on 3/4/02 at www.obrien.ie/Book187.cfm.

⁶⁵ Women in National Parliaments, as of February 4, 2002. Accessed online at www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.

⁶⁶ "Sample statistics of *Women in History* chart," accessed online on 2/21/02 at www.synchronopedia.com/samplepercent20WIHpercent20stats.htm.

⁶⁷ "Statistics," *Online Women in Politics*, accessed online on 3/4/02 at www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/statistics.htm.

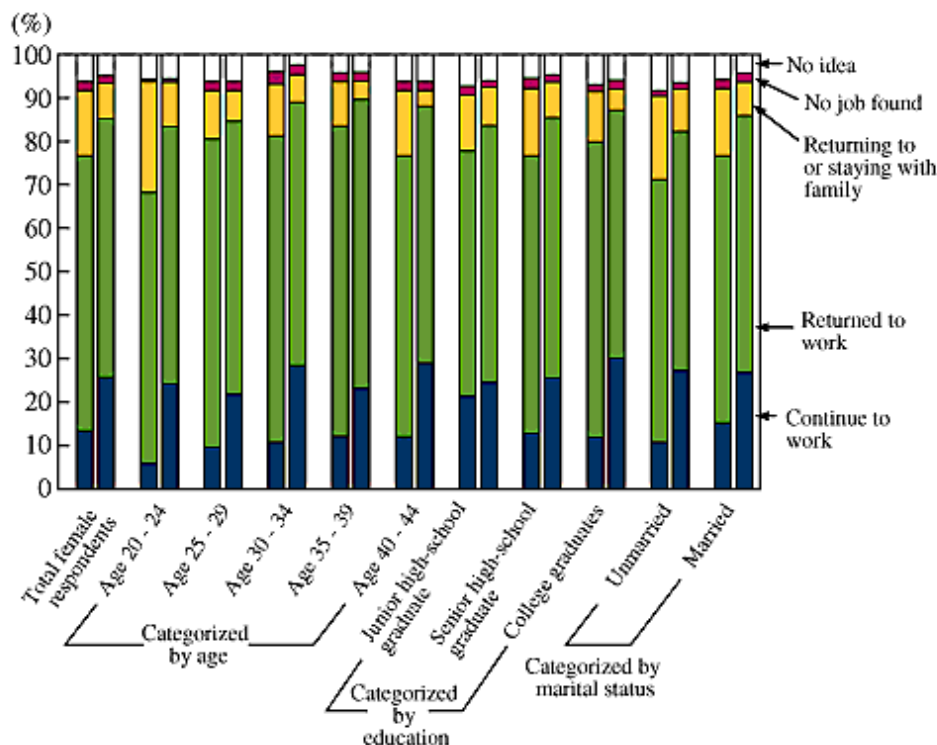
⁶⁸ "Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership," www.guide2womenleaders.com, 3/4/02.

- Out of 179 countries, ranked in descending order by the percentage of women in national parliaments, the top ten countries, in order, are: Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Iceland, Germany, New Zealand, Argentina, and Mozambique.⁶⁹
- The first country to give women the right to vote was New Zealand in 1893.⁷⁰
- The following countries have not granted voting rights to women as of early 2002: Brunei Darussalam, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Women in National Parliaments as of February 4, 2002. Accessed online at www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.

⁷⁰ United Nations, "Women at a Glance," (May 1997). Accessed online on 3/4/02 at www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/women96.htm.

⁷¹ "Selected Suffrage Facts: Winning the Vote in National Elections,"(2001). Accessed online on 3/4/02 at womeninworldhistory.com/factLesson4.html.

Exhibit 1 Women's Attitudes of Female Employment in Japan⁷²

Notes: Left column: Women's answers to the question of "What do you think in general is the best pattern of employment for a woman during her life?"

Right column: Women's answers to the question of "What is the best pattern of employment for women if such social mechanisms as a legal system to support a woman's right of absence and the provision of comprehensive day-care facilities and services are in place?"

The answer choices for these questions are summarized as follows:

- Continue to work: Acquire job and keep working for a long time.
- Return to work: Go back to work after staying at home temporarily following marriage or childbirth.
- Return to or stay with family: Decide to return or stay at home permanently after marriage or childbirth.
- No job found: Never employed throughout life.
- No idea: Includes answers by respondents who cannot decide or have other responses.

⁷² All of the following information taken from "Women Working and Pursuing Careers," Japan Insight, Focus 5, Data table 14-1. Data source: "Public opinion poll on women's employment," Prime Minister's Office (1998). Accessed online at http://jin.jcic.or.jp/insight/html/focus05/women_working/women_working_and01.html.