

## Letter from the President

Dear U.S. National Committee for UN Women,

“Gender equality and the empowerment of women is both an enabler and an outcome of sustainable development.” These are the words of Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women. I was privileged to hear them during the meeting of the UN Women National Committees in Australia and have come home more inspired than ever by the work that we do. The advancement of women is not only the right thing to do but the smart thing. Women are the key to solving world problems like climate change, peace and security, global health and poverty. USNC-UN Women’s mission of expanding support for UN Women within the United States remains as important as ever. For more details about the groundbreaking meeting Down Under and UN Women’s work, please read the full article below.

Internally, USNC-UN Women has been busy as well. After a very successful annual meeting and conference hosted by the North Carolina chapter in June, there has been much behind-the-scenes work. The USNC website received a facelift, our Facebook page and Twitter feed have been humming with postings and comments and we have launched a brand new membership framework. We are promoting the historic PBS series, *Women, War and Peace*, as well as a national call-in day to Congressional representatives to spur support of UN Women. We will also be focusing on preventing child marriage as a means of promoting greater education and empowerment of girls.

I am looking forward to these and other events in the next year tremendously. Please join us at this exciting juncture as we work toward a world where women and girls live free from poverty, violence and inequality.



Maggie Forster Schmitz, President



## Important Changes to Our Membership

*from Terry Brackett*

The US National Committee is making important changes to our membership structure. The most exciting change is going to provide YOU, our supporters, a way of giving a bit more without a one-time dramatic impact on your finances.

This new structure will allow you to join at a higher level and pay in small monthly amounts. For example, you can join at the \$250 level, and pay only \$25 monthly. We know these are tough economic times, so we want to make it as easy as possible for you to give women and girls worldwide a much louder voice. We urge you to consider increasing your membership level through our new monthly giving levels. For all of you who increase your level of giving to \$100 between now and the end of 2011, you will receive our new USNC-UN Women lapel pin.

Additional details of these changes will be on our website:  
<http://www.unwomen-usnc.org/>

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## Part of a UN Women Global Coalition: The US National Committee and Its Counterparts Share Ideas and Inspiration



### Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN Women

Once again, the US National Committee participated in the annual meeting of the UN Women National Committees from around the world. The meeting opened with a field trip to Bangkok. Carol Poteat-Buchanan, immediate past president of USNC-UN Women, was present to witness the Southeast Asian launch of the UN Women Flagship Report, *2011-2012 Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice*, held at the UN Conference Center on Thursday, September 1. Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, gave the keynote address in which she emphasized that laws protecting women and women's rights are critical. There are now 173 countries that have ratified the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); 125 that have laws outlawing domestic violence; and 125 that guarantee property rights for women. The United States has not ratified CEDAW. From these laws, innovative programs have been created to help women. For example, Nepal gives tax exemptions to families if they transfer property to women. In Morocco, family courts can utilize government funds to help support alimony payments. However, significant work remains to secure women's rights. Ms. Puri emphasized the 18 recommendations in the report that both individuals and nations can undertake to further women's rights.

Following Ms. Puri's speech was a panel discussion about how aspects of the Report are being implemented in Southeast Asia. Of special interest was the fact that some countries, e.g. Singapore, have dual justice systems, such as a federal and tribal/local system, which sometimes conflict with each other. Deputy Secretary General and former UNIFEM head Noeleen Heyzer was also present and thanked everyone for attending the meeting. In a brief encounter she sent regards to the members of the US National Committee.

### UN Women Projects At Work

On Friday, September 2, the National Committee delegation visited two UN Women projects. The first was Thonburi Court, a special court set up specifically to ease the trauma of women victims of violence. The courtroom is partitioned so that the victim cannot see the defendant when she testifies, and there are two doors so that the parties can enter and leave without encountering each other. And while rape and serious physical injuries resulting from gender-



Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN Women and Kate Ellis MP, Minister for the Status of Women, Australia

based violence are treated as serious crimes that require a jail sentence, for less violent crimes, there is forced mediation. These and other developments are examples of how Thailand is working to implement CEDAW. (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>)

The second program, Mobilizing Youth Leaders: A Case Study of a School-based Approach to Violence Prevention, took place at the Rajini Girls High School in Bangkok and is a joint effort between UN Women, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Justice. The Rajini School, along with three other local schools, participated in a three-day training in gender sensitivity, which resulted in action plans for each school. Examples included distributing whistles to students and seminars in which students could express their own experiences with violence. Also, the students have collected over three million signatures for the Say No to Violence campaign. (<http://www.saynotoviolence.org/>)

## **Eleven UN Women National Committees Convene in Australia**

Summer, Northern Hemisphere; winter, Australia. Directly following inspiring UN Women project visits in Thailand, the US National Committee participated in the annual meeting of the UN Women National Committees from around the world in Australia, with immediate past president, Carol Poteat-Buchanan, and current president, Maggie Forster Schmitz, attending. On Monday, September 4, the Australian National Committee hosted an all-day seminar, *Accelerating Gender Equality: Introducing UN Women*, at the University of Sydney. (<http://www.unifem.org.au/AnnouncementRetrieve.aspx?ID=55989>) Over 200 representatives from the state and federal government, corporations, and non-profits attended. Highlights were a talk by Helen Brereton of UN Women's Pacific Regional Office, who provided first-hand details of her work with the newly-established Pacific Trust to End Violence Against Women in the Pacific island nations, and a speech by the Honorable Kate Ellis MP, Minister for the Status of Women.



***Carol Buchanan & Maggie Forster Schmitz***

## **June 11, 2011 USNC-UN Women Annual National Conference**

The United States National Committee for UN Women convened in Raleigh, North Carolina, on June 11th for its annual national conference, under the theme of “*UNITE for PEACE - in our home, in our community and in our world*”. Over 250 participants from across the country met to attend a series of informative, enlightening and inspiring panel discussions and presentations to facilitate efforts to make a difference in the global fight to eliminate violence and discrimination against women and girls. IBM, IEM, GSK, North Carolina State University and Progress Energy were the premier sponsors of the conference.

Over 80 organizations and businesses participated as attendees or exhibition sponsors or speakers, publicized the conference and sponsored scholarships. See the photographs and read about the highlights at <http://www.unwomen-usnc.org/2011conference>.

Highlights of the all-day conference included a spirited address by Elaine Marshall, the North Carolina Secretary of State; a flag ceremony by Girl Scouts; a youth forum panel focused on providing the “next generation’s” perspective; a dance performance by Saint Mary’s School students to “Crumbling Castle,” a song about a girl caught in sex trafficking; a preview of an upcoming PBS film series on Women, War and Peace; and sessions on social media training.

Michelle Bachelet, the Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, addressed the audience in a special video message, and Antonie de Jong, UN Women Business Development Advisor, spoke passionately about the impact of UN Women’s work. A photo exhibit of “Empowered Women” from across the developing world, by Phil Borges, was also featured. The North Carolina Chapter members and volunteers organized a wonderful conference with ample opportunities to network, learn and enjoy North Carolina hospitality. Kudos to the energetic and talented conference committee members: Beth Briggs, Mary Cantando, Emily Clabaugh, Rick Copeland, Jill Dinwiddie, Joanne Hershfield, Beena Koshy, Tara Lee, Mary Beth Loucks-Sorrell, Dana Mangum, Charity Magnuson, Younghee Overly, Sheila Smith McKoy and Patricia Witt. We send special thanks to the students who volunteered, and to the premier and media sponsors - IBM, IEM, GSK, North Carolina State University,



***Flag Ceremony***



## UVA Chapter Chartered at the National Conference

“The University of Virginia (UVA) has 732 clubs/contracted independent organizations (CIOs), but not one of them devoted itself to helping underprivileged women - until now. I started USNC-UN Women at UVA because I believe that as students of a modern university and citizens of a developed society, it is up to me and my peers at UVA to help improve the standing of women in society.

In the 21st century, the age of progress and new ideas, women continue to stand at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder due to the prevalent patriarchal social system and lack of resources. Female UVA students, like me, have the opportunity to secure higher education and the hopes of a promising career. We have basic freedoms that many women lack, and it is important for the students at UVA to empower women worldwide. It will bring a new perspective to UVA students, while helping millions of women and girls realize their dreams.”

**Maya Venkatraman,**  
*Founder and President of UVA Club*

Progress Energy, News & Observer and Charlotte Observer.

## Let's Get Social with Social Media!

*By Stephanie Block*

This handy, dandy newsletter will now include a social media component written by your friendly, neighborhood, new board member and Social Media Maven. So let's get social together!

The triple triumvirate of social media is Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Did you know that this past July, Facebook passed the 750 million active users mark? Twitter has over 200 million registered accounts. LinkedIn has over 120 million members. Amazing!



This is great news for USNC-UN Women. It means we have the ability to reach out to millions and millions of people around the world for FREE. That's right -- the cost to join any of these social networks is zero...with a zed! USNC-UN Women has a new name, a new logo, a new brand, a new president... and now we have new Facebook and Twitter accounts that reflect our recent reincarnation.

There's only one more ingredient we need to add to this social media soup: YOU. You're about to become a social media star! FACEBOOK Today we'll talk about Facebook. **Visit "U.S. National Committee for UN Women (USNC)" here:** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/US-National-Committee-for-UN-Women-USNC/118372414848063>.

Once you have found us, LIKE us! Hit that beautiful Like button with the thumbs up icon. Now that you LIKE us, it's time to join the conversation. Every single day, the brave Social Media Committee -- Stephanie Platis, Liz Colson, Maggie Forster Schmitz, Crystal Lander, Susan Cutri, moi -- find articles, links, videos and even breaking UN Women news to post. Below each post are three options: Like, Comment, Share.

Do it! Like requires a quick click. Comment requires a brief thought off the top of your head. Share puts our post on your own Facebook homepage.



On your own Facebook page, chat about us in a status update with a live link to our page: "I am a proud supporter of @U.S. National Committee for UN Women (USNC)." Please Like our page. You can send out invitations on Facebook to Like us by clicking on the "Invite Friends" icon with the little people silhouettes. What pops up is a box filled with your digital entourage of BFF's. With each person's name you submit, a wee Facebook email suggesting our page goes out. Voila... networking us with your social network!

To recap, then:

1. Like us on Facebook.
2. Like, Comment and Share our posts.
3. Mention @U.S. National Committee for UN Women (USNC) in your status updates.
4. Invite your friends to check out our home on Facebook.

## New Board Member

Each issue will feature information on a board member or member of our advisory council. This month we highlight Don McPherson, a native of West Hempstead, New York, and a veteran of the NFL and Canadian Football League. For more than 20 years, Don McPherson has used the power and appeal of sport to address complex social issues. McPherson has paralleled a highly decorated football career with work on vital and contemporary issues. His message is Positive, Proactive, and Practical.



**Don McPherson**

serves on an advisory committee for the National Football Foundation and sits on the board of directors of the Ms. Foundation for Women.

## Working Mother of the Year

**WORKING MOTHER** magazine named *Younghee Overly* as one of the 2011 "Working Mothers of the Year."

Younghee is the president of the North Carolina Chapter of USNC, recently chaired the USNC National Conference and is a representative to the National Board for the Chapter Presidents. Younghee said, "I used to read WORKING MOTHER religiously for tips when I was struggling with the juggling act of being a mom and an IBM manager at the same time. Without IBM being flexible with me, I couldn't do what I am doing with USNC for UN Women and without having the opportunity to organize this year's USNC for UN Women national conference, I couldn't have been nominated by IBM for recognition as 'Working Mother of the Year.' So this is such an honor and so special to me."

Younghee was nominated by a colleague at IBM, who was intrigued with the dedication and energy Younghee has committed to USNC-UN Women and the 2011 conference and her impressive career at IBM as Program Director, IBM's Social Business Adoption.

The award honors working mothers who make significant contributions to both their company and community. The Working Mothers of the Year can be nominated by anyone and are selected by the Working Mother editorial team. The 2011 Working Mothers of the Year was recognized at the 100 Best Companies Gala Award Dinner in New York on October 20th. Younghee's husband, Andy, and son, Adrian, will join her at the award dinner to celebrate this honor.



**Younghee Overly** along with her husband, Andy, and son Adrian (14 yrs old).

## USNC-UN Women partners with Independent Television Service (ITVS)

The US National Committee for UN Women was approached by ITVS on partnering with them to show ITVS's films focused on Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment. The first project we worked on together was to shorten the 50 minutes version of "Taking Roots" to 10-20 minute modules so we can use them at our meetings. ITVS also developed special discussion guides appropriate for our audiences. The Bay Area, East Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Southern California Chapters held screenings of "Taking Roots" throughout 2010 educating almost a thousand people on the Green Belt Movement and its founder, the late Wangari Maathai, the first environmentalist and first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. UN Women, then UNIFEM, was one of the first and major donors to the Green Belt Movement.

USNC-UN Women will continue to work with ITVS on a 3-year program called "Women and Girls Lead," which is a collection of films focusing on women working to transform their lives, communities and the world. The next project is to promote the showing of a five-part PBS series "Women, War and Peace," co-produced by THIRTEEN and Fork Films in association with WNET and ITVS. The series began airing Tuesday, October 11th, 2011. Fork Films has provided an 11-minute trailer that we can use at our meetings. Please contact Grace Richardson at [gracer@nyc.rr.com](mailto:gracer@nyc.rr.com) or Younghee Overly at [yoverly@gmail.com](mailto:yoverly@gmail.com) if you are interested in showing "Taking Roots" and/or "Women, War and Peace."

Be sure to check your local television listing for information on the broadcast of "Women, War & Peace." USNC-UN Women supports films focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. This inspiring partnership with Independent Television Service (ITVS) provides USNC with a wonderful opportunity to promote the mission of UN Women and raise community awareness through the vision of dedicated filmmakers and ITVS.

**Editor's note:** I just finished "Unbowed: A Memoir" by Wangari Maathai (Alfred A Knopf, NY 2006). Maathai is the 2004 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and featured in "Taking Root." This is a well-written and interesting story by a remarkable woman.

## **UNiTE Campaign seeks \$100,000 to implement the Say NO-UNiTE Project** **by Urjasi Rudra, Say No Coordinator**

**SAY NO  
UNiTE**  
TO END VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN

The Say NO UNiTE project is a fundamental and important project of UN Women. The following goals outline the plans for the coming year:

- 1) Refresh and maintain the interactive web platform, [www.saynotoviolence.com](http://www.saynotoviolence.com), specifically through improved interactive features, development of a smart phone app for the online quiz, (<http://www.saynotoviolence.org/quiz>) expanded outreach to civil society and on social media.
- 2) Develop and roll out a global non-formal education curriculum in at least 20 countries by the end of 2012, in partnership with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). Once developed, the curriculum can be adapted and translated into national/local context and language and taken to schools and youth groups external to WAGGGS as well.
- 3) Support the launch of youth-led campaigns in faith communities around the world, starting with pilot campaigns in four countries in 2011 and subsequently scaling up the project in more countries, in partnership with Religions for Peace.
- 4) Support the development of a Government and Parliamentary outreach toolkit, which will be then used and disseminated by UN Women field offices, National Committees and UNiTE Campaign global Secretariat and Regional Components to elicit positive actions and commitments.

## **Advocacy Report - from Crystal Lander**

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading cause of deaths globally, killing more people each year than all other causes combined. Available data suggests that 80% of NCD deaths occur in low- to middle-income countries. NCDs are comprised mainly of cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and chronic lung diseases. It is understood that NCDs are caused by four behavioral risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, insufficient physical activity and harmful use of alcohol. This leads to serious socioeconomic consequences, through individual and household impoverishment, and hinders social and economic development.

Women's health is largely connected to and vital for ANY family, community or country's growth and development. For this reason, a global call has been issued by the General Assembly to draw attention to NCDs and stimulate policy dialogue on particular issues related to girls and women in the lead up to the first-ever UN High-Level Summit on NCDs in September 19 and 20, 2011. The High-Level Meeting shall address the prevention and control of NCDs worldwide, with a particular focus on NCDs' impact on developing countries.

Women are essential for sustainable development. Availability of and access to health resources improve maternal health and reduce child mortality rates. Women in good health conditions are instrumental in the progress of the life of a household, community or nation. Therefore, prevention and control of NCDs, the world's number one killer, is a priority for women's health and development. By collaborating our efforts and resources and protecting women from NCDs risk factors, we will benefit the lives of millions of girls and women throughout the world.

