

W O M E N A N D T H E F A M I L Y

EDITORIAL

The Family Network office receives a large number of pleas for financial assistance. IAFN is not a grant-giving organisation and is regrettably not able to give money to individuals or to particular projects. Many of the cries for help are from mothers in Africa, desperate to get funds to enable them to educate their daughters and so equip them to escape from the cycle of poverty, early pregnancy, single parenthood, and more poverty. They know that, without the benefits of education, their daughters will probably be as imprisoned as they have been. Many of the articles in this newsletter tell of the problems of uneducated and deprived mothers. As

with uneducated and deprived fathers, the effects on their families are incalculable. Research shows that educating women and girls is the single most effective strategy for reducing poverty.

Economic and social changes are also affecting the role of women in the family. Several of the authors make clear that women in many parts of the world are increasingly having to provide for their families. While for some this may develop opportunities and potential, it can also increase stress and overwork. More than one article indicates an increasing prevalence of drunkenness among men. Whether or not a cause of this is the erosion of men's role as providers for their family, it vastly exacerbates the

burden on women. As the article from Hong Kong points out, a change in attitude – a fuller understanding of the need for partnership between men and women in the family situation – is slow in developing. The same point was made in a joint World Health Organisation, UNICEF and UNESCO statement: -

Women's Work

Putting today's essential health knowledge into practice will be seen by many as "women's work"

But women already have work.

They already grow most of the developing world's food, market most of its crops, fetch most of its water, collect most of its fuel, feed most of its animals, weed most of its fields.

And when their work outside the home is done, they light the third world's fires, cook its meals, clean its compounds, wash its clothes, shop for its meals and look after its old and its ill.

And they bear and care for its children.

The multiple burdens of womanhood are too much.

And the greatest communications challenge of all is the challenge of communicating the idea that the time has come, in all countries, for men to share more fully in that most difficult and important of all tasks –protecting

the lives and health and the growth of their children.

Primary Health Care messages are therefore addressed not only to women but to men.

(Printed in "Partners in Health" written and published by Christians Aware 1993, ISBN 1 873372 06 X.)

In many parts of the world, the tensions and lack of understanding between men and women in the family situation can lead to violence. In this newsletter, we have included stories telling of this from Papua New Guinea, an area where a horrifyingly large number of women

suffer such terrors in their family situation.

This newsletter also celebrates the strengths of women – working to bring peace in the Sudan, more social cohesion in S. India, learning new skills in the Lebanon, and in many other countries. The Christian message of love, understanding, support and practical action is the message of hope. It is being acted on in many parts of the Anglican Communion by women – and also by men – with practical projects to help women in the family and mobilise their many skills and resources. But the task is immense.

UGANDA

However, today in Kabale District, women's roles have changed because of hard circumstances such as over-population because of the large number of children the women bring up as a result of no birth control. It is difficult to depend on the little harvest got from the small gardens and so women are forced to move out in search of a day's work like digging a neighbour's garden and in return they are given commodities, for example a basket of beans or money.

Due to lack of enough land, the gardens are over-used, producing less food crops and because of poor methods of farming, women divert to the role of looking after domestic animals.

Some husbands in the family fail totally even to raise money to pay their own taxes, buy basic essentials such as clothes, soap, salt and paying school fees for their children, and so women – responding to all of this – resort to small-scale businesses, like selling food crops and vegetables, second-hand clothes in market places and teaming with women's groups and societies which provide affordable loans to boost their small businesses.

Polygamy has caused violence in most families. Here a man has to provide an equal share of his earnings among all his wives. If not, the wives fight for their rights. This has caused some women to find other sources of income rather than being dependant on one man, such as selling themselves as prostitutes.

When these women get the little money worked for outside the home, the husband, with authority as a head of the family, demands it from the wife for his own consumption. If a woman tries to resist, the husband becomes violent to his wife to the extent of beating her and chasing her out of their home. Children are left alone and eventually end up living on the urban streets as street kids who depend on food in garbage places.

Parents prefer a boy child for education rather than a girl child. This leaves girls vulnerable to illiteracy, prostitution and

early marriages. As a result, these young women fail to manage homes. Due to lack of education, there is no hygiene both in their homes and environments and this exposes them to dangers of many different diseases. It all becomes a vicious circle of problems.

At Kabale Women's Guidance and Counselling Services (KWGCS), we mainly build women's self-confidence and self-esteem as a means to overcome poor self-image that causes poverty in most families.

We are concerned with a woman's independent thinking, helping a woman to accept and appreciate who she is, and encouraging women to plan ahead rather than lamenting on what has gone wrong in the past. However, to achieve this we need support to carry on income-generating activities specifically to help woman come out of poverty. Because it is hard to achieve social independence when not able to provide for herself.

So far, the women's project has a knitting club, agricultural practices, literacy education and drama activities. With the availability of funds, we have plans to build a school where tailoring, computer training and Sunday School teacher training will be taught. This would help girls who drop out of schools to attain survival skills, and also produce responsible mothers who would later train and encourage their own daughters. Our motto is: Educate a woman, you will have educated a whole nation.

It is at this point that I express my appreciation to the present Uganda Government, which has considered women as part of development unlike other parts of development. Nonetheless, a lot is still desired as most people still hold on to traditions that under-estimate women's role in the family and development in general.

Women in most African countries carry the major work load of all the activities done in a homestead. The majority of men in Uganda – and Kabale District in particular – come home late at night drunk. These are the same men who rise up early in the morning and leave their families in search of a day's wage. Due to this, women have no alternative but to spend the day looking for ways of maintaining and managing their family. Some African religions and cultures do not permit women to go beyond their homesteads in search for jobs or activities that provide a day's wage.

In Uganda, women's roles are producing children and bringing them up, cleaning the home, cooking food for the family, collecting fire-wood, cultivating the gardens, weeding and harvesting in the due season.

The role of women:

The woman was created to fill in the gap and all that God created was described as very good. God said: "It is not good that man be alone, I will make a helpmeet for him." The woman was thus made to complement the man. She is to fit in where he is weak and lacking. Such roles include the following:-

- She complements her husband as the head of the home in all capacities: financially, socially, emotionally.
- Providing a balanced diet for the family rests upon her.
- Ensuring that the home is neat, tidy and a haven for family members.
- Apportioning various duties to her household members.
- She should be an encourager and confidant to her husband and children, especially when they are troubled or distressed.

Changing roles of the Woman in the Family:

The roles of women have changed drastically in the present age because of the economic recession in the country.

- More women are becoming career minded and now put marriage/ children's upbringing as second place to their career/ambition.
- As a result, many more women work outside their homes and this results in lack of training and discipline of children.
- Women now venture into previous "no go" areas such as some business sectors dominated by men (mechanics) and now politics.
- Women now prefer to be single parents, unmarried and feel no need of a partner to help raise children. They feel self-sufficient, are power-drunk and the Biblical injunction to submit unto your husband as unto the Lord is totally rejected and not necessary.

Particular Problems of Women:

- Illiteracy, which leads to ignorance, hence basic health matters are unknown and infant mortality, disease and infection is high.
- Marrying off young girls to suitors in their early teens, thus making them prone to medical and other problems.
- Where men lazy around drinking, the women do subsistence farming which cannot yield enough revenue for other basic needs e.g. education and health care.

- Lack of jobs and basic education. Girls are hired and enticed for greener pastures abroad. They are introduced to prostitution. Hard currencies are earned but the danger always looms like a shadow after them. They are trapped, ensnared and cannot break free when they want to except by the power in the blood of Jesus.

Projects that can help women in their family situation and those who work outside the home to care for their families:

1. Day Care Centres: to care for pre-nursery-age children of the working mothers.
2. Milling Machine: this is particularly useful in rural settings where the staple food is grains. This machine is used for shelling, de-hulling, winnowing and a thresher and grinder all in one. Much revenue is earned this way.
3. Vocational Centre: young girls and women can be trained to do various skills such as sewing, weaving, knitting

and cookery. They can eventually earn money from these.

4. Rentals: acquisition of cooking utensils, canopies, party tables and chairs which can be rented out to those in need at parties, wedding and burial ceremonies. Money can be realised from this.
5. Making of chilled drinks; local drinks like kunu (from millet) zobo and ginger drinks. Ice blocks and these drinks sell well during the heat period. The capital required is usually low.

The Mothers' Union in Kaduna Diocese has some of these projects to help the women in the diocese.

KENYA

group of distraught women had decided to take the law into their hands and raided liquor dens in some quarters of the towns. There was chaos and mayhem everywhere as the women smashed crude distillation equipment and herded home the drunken husbands.

While it is true that poverty, lack of education, dependence are among the challenges facing women, for some women in Kenya the problem of men's alcoholism has been one of the causes of change in their status. Women are now emerging as head of their families, taking charge of their families as though they were single mothers.

Alcoholism is an all-powerful enemy that knows no boundaries and has scant regard for the sanctity and sanity of family life. It affects both rich and poor families and women from these families resort to other ways of survival. Alcoholism leads to loss of income, as husbands spend almost all their earnings on brews which are described as dangerous. The effects of these brews is to incapacitate men from playing their rightful roles effectively in the family. These drunk husbands behave no better than 'zombies', as some wives put it. At the same time, alcoholism has led to lack of education for some children because there is no money to pay their school fees.

This is why the women decided to take

up a leading role in destroying the drinking dens and places where beer is brewed. As well as destroying the drinking places, they have had to meet up with the administrators to challenge the sale of brews that have turned the menfolk into 'vegetables'. In some instances the administrators promise the women that the drinking places will be destroyed, but the effect of this is little because women lack real support from a largely male-dominated society.

The Church, with strong women's groups like the Mothers' Union, has not taken action apart from preaching against drinking and condemning those who drink. In many instances, those who drink do not come to church even if their wives attend. If the women are to succeed in their battle against alcoholism, the Church needs to do more than preaching from the pulpit. The Church needs to be in solidarity with those who are affected by alcoholism whether they are men, women or children. There should be room to rehabilitate and counsel those that are affected by alcoholism. This is when men and women can share family responsibilities that are now being shouldered by women.

Women raid liquor dens

Kangemi and Muranga are two towns which fall in the Dioceses of Mt. Kenya South and Central. Late last year and early this year, the two towns were pierced by the noise of destruction. A

SUDAN

Devastated by war, the women of southern Sudan work tirelessly to feed and clothe their families, whilst playing a leading role in bringing peace to their communities.

In the small village of Wulu near Rumbek, a dedicated group of women are working on a new project to improve their livelihoods. They are trained and supported by MEDIC, part-funded by Christian Aid, to produce Lulu oil for the local market. Derived from the nut of the Lulu tree, the oil is extremely versatile and is used for everything from cooking oil to hair wax. Grinding and pressing the nuts is exhausting work, but for these women it is invaluable.

Most women working on the Lulu project have experienced first-hand the struggle of raising a family in a war where civilians are the main casualties. Hasina fled from the Nuba Mountains to rebel-held Rumbek in 1993.

"When the fighting came to the Nuba, women had to sneak out of the house before sunrise to find water for the family. Often, when they returned, they found people who had died, maybe an old

person or a child. I have lost twelve relatives like that."

Hasina was forced to leave her eldest daughter and her mother behind when she ran from the Nuba mountains. She has no way to contact them and does not know if they are alive or dead. Now living in Wulu, Hasina feels safe and, thanks to the income she gains from the Lulu project, she will be able to send her youngest daughter to school.

Hasina hopes and prays for peace and asks the outside world to pressure for peace in Sudan.

"I am hoping that lasting peace will come and I ask God to put strength in the hearts of the people supporting us."

Just as women play a vital role in supporting the family during conflict, they also play an active part in building peace at the grassroots. Awut Deng is a peace mobiliser. Whilst pregnant with her seventh child, she walked for five hours in the bush to encourage local women to attend a peace conference, she slept under the stars and did not eat for three days.

"Through my work, I ensured that one fifth of the delegates at Wunlit (a local peace conference) were women. When I first raised the issue of women's involvement, some men thought that the women should be mobilised to do the cooking! I had to persuade them that women should be involved as full participants in working for peace in southern Sudan."

Despite Awut's experience, women in Sudan are rarely able to fulfil their potential. The key benefit of the Lulu projects is not the economic gain, but the opportunities they create for women to work together. Through their involvement, women learn production and marketing skills, literacy and numeracy. This strengthens their position in society and gives them the confidence they require to contribute fully to peace and development in southern Sudan.

CONGO

Diocese of Katanga

It is important for society to recognise the value of the family. It is a pity that the issue of family life is not usually addressed by Government or Non-Governmental Organisations. We notice that many problems that affect the family are based on discrimination within the family and the entire society.

In urban areas, some families have lost their identity. The marriage is no longer a unity system for a basic family. For those who accept and continue living together despite economic difficulties, men and women are no longer playing their traditional and complementary roles.

With the current critical economic and social situation aggravated by several wars in our country, men have resigned their traditional role of providers for the family. The majority are unemployed, and those who are still employed are not paid for several months. Women have now taken over sustaining life in their families. They work hard for their families' survival.

We positively notice that women are

progressively motivated to take part in the world dynamic. With cultural interaction, and according to the world evolution, women in the Democratic Republic of Congo are interested in their education. They also participate in the professional areas.

The main obstacle remains the financial means.

In rural areas, women are still victims of cultural values. These cultures maintain women in under-privileged situations. Once a woman is married, she should work hard for her husband. If she is not strong enough, she can be replaced by a stronger woman. Some husbands, who need more workers, prefer polygamy. A woman is supposed to cultivate a big farm to have food provision for her home. Every day from the farm she must carry heavy burdens for daily food while the husband enjoys chatting and drinking beer with friends. As if it is not enough for her, she must deliver as many children as possible because the value of the family depends on how big the family is, despite

the high level of poverty which the majority live in. In case she delivers only females, she must continue until she has a baby boy, otherwise her husband can marry another woman to provide a son.

Children are taught from a small age to behave in discriminatory ways according to their sex. Boys are not supposed to help their mothers with the housework. They will become men. They must behave like their fathers. They are the ones to be sent to school. Girls are supposed to be helping their mothers in the house while waiting to be married.

A family is God's creation where love and harmony should prevail. This is our challenge as Christians to bring change in our society so that women can enjoy their lives as a gift from God.



SOUTH INDIA

Strength of women the family

Avathum pennalae alivathum pennalae – This is an old Indian Tamil proverb. It means: "Women are either creators or destroyers." This common saying in the Tamil culture is not only in the society but also prevailing in the Churches. In the Churches the teaching is being emphasised through the proverb in the Bible: "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." (Proverbs 14: 1) The capabilities of women, whether bringing destruction or construction, is accepted both in the culture and religion.

In this article I would like to be more optimistic in sharing about the women who are living in the part of India called Tuticorin and Tirunelveli District. These two districts belong to Tirunelveli Diocese in the Church of South India.

220 years ago, Tirunelveli Diocese was established by the SPG and CMS Missionaries. The first convert of this diocese was a woman named Clarinda. She was a high caste Brahmin lady and also showed a great Christian characteristic in building the bridges, by breaking the caste, class and religious barriers so strong in that time, to bring others to realise Christ's love. Women's Education and Medical Missions are well developed in these areas through the women missionaries

in the past, and women educators, nurses and doctors in the contemporary development of the diocese.

It is no doubt that our society is a patriarchal society. But the traditional role of women in our society is being changed through employment opportunities provided for women through small-scale industries, institutions and also businesses. Women have more opportunity to build the Church family and their own family. Obviously they are the real strength to the family in the society and also the family in the Church.

In the diocese at present, we do not have any women ordained persons although the diocese has many theologically trained women. They dedicate their life for God's ministry in the diocese to work among women.

In this area, bringing up the children and nurturing the children, is the sole responsibility and capability of the women both in the Church as well as in the society. Women are fulfilling their responsibility as the caretakers, co-ordinators for their menial tasks in their households, counsellors for the weak and needy people in their families. Generosity in giving and generous hospitality are the real strength that builds their family. Men are not

excluded from the above duties. But women have more responsibilities in these areas.

There is a vast difference in attitudes and status prevailing between rich women and poor women, young women and old women, rural women and urban women, literate women and illiterate women in these areas. But giving solidarity to their own afflicted family members in their struggles is very common. The elderly women in the family enhance this. In the Church family also, women try to fill the gap by sacrificing their time and life in many areas to break the barriers in these disparities. I worked as secretary in the Diocesan Women's Fellowship for six years and Director for the Counselling ministry in the diocese for five years. Women do have more capacity to care for others. In the diocese, women have a feeding programme for the beggars and homeless. Women extended their cooking talent and gathered the beggars in the church courtyard every Wednesday. They not only give the food

for the physical strength, but also they show their concern by enquiring about the beggar's life and trying to fulfil their mental and spiritual needs. Moreover, women try to integrate the rich and illiterate women involved in these projects and break the barrier between rich and poor women. It creates the belongingness among the beggars and needy people to show they are part of Christian community.

Nagalapuram and Sayamalai are in the northern area of our diocese. This area is very dry. Women got the vision to work in these areas and help the villages around Nagalapuram to develop the people physically, mentally and spiritually. More young women are being trained theologically in the women's training centre in Nagalapuram. These women trainees, and other women in the centre, visit the nearby remote villages, promoting Christian and social values, caring for the children through pre-schools and educating the women through adult literacy programmes. Now we can see

the real community development in these areas through women. These are the real examples for the strength of women in creating belongingness and harmonious relationship among the families in the Church and in the society.

"Prayer and Bible meditation bring victory" is the motto for many women in this area. Through family prayer, fasting prayer and chain of prayer, they pray for God's help and strength. They memorise the Bible verses and try to practise the teaching in their life.

To close, I would like to say women not only have the strength, but also have more insights, to bring up their families in the Church and in the society.

LEBANON

In Lebanon, the culture in rural villages is still very traditional in that women are expected to cover their heads, stay around their homes and within the confines of their villages. Their husbands work and return home expecting to see the meal on the table at a set time.

USAID, together with the YMCA Lebanon, ran a three-year project from 1998 to promote stability and sustainable socio-economic development in targeted clusters of remote rural villages in Lebanon. One component of this programme was an income-generating activity for women.

A survey conducted by the YMCA noted that women in villages were extremely poor and their husbands were unemployed. Supporting the family had become a major challenge. In some of these villages women were collecting fruit, such as plums, apricots, olives or tomatoes which were lying on the ground either after a harvest or perhaps just blown by the wind. The women had an idea that something could be done with this fruit but were not clear what to do or how to proceed.

In collaboration with the YMCA and specialists, an eight-week training course was developed for 30 women which covered topics such as nutrition, food processing, health and hygiene, marketing and sales. The course encouraged some women to form production co-operatives and to start economic ventures by providing them

with legal details of co-operatives initiation and training them on accounting, marketing and sales concepts. After three years, a total of 900 women were trained using only natural preservative methods. Donors have supplied solar dryers and other machinery.

"Rural Delights" as one co-operative is now called, supplies major supermarkets in Lebanon and is now looking overseas for export markets. Women, who previously had no opportunity to train in anything, to undertake paid work or contribute to the family income, are now running a successful business from the village. Women are more confident about gathering with other women, in talking over issues relevant to them, they have developed self-esteem and men

have more respect for them than in the past because they are now contributing members of the family unit. All this whilst remaining true to their culture. This interaction has allowed women to share problems, experiences, solutions and has enhanced their family life.

One remarkable achievement is that women were allowed to travel out of their village in order to attend training. As a result of this contact and the successful business venture, Westerners have been allowed into these rural villages to learn of this enterprising activity and see how such an activity can enrich village life.

The Challenges of Women Under Economic Downturn

In the wake of the financial turmoil in 1998, Hong Kong experienced its own drastic economic downturn and the many challenges it has brought along. The unemployment rate has reached an unprecedented high of more than 6.7%. People, regardless of educational level, no longer enjoy job security due to either layoffs or closing down of companies. People who spend all their savings in paying mortgage for their dream homes have suddenly found that they have become assets of negative value because of the prevailing devaluation of real estates. All these economic instabilities have brought along threats and challenges to families in Hong Kong, and the changing roles of women and men in a modernised society has further been shaken and put on debate.

In Hong Kong, more than half (51.5%) of the population is women, and close to 50% of them participate in the labour force, making an ever increasing contribution to the development of Hong Kong's economic, political and social life. However, despite such facts, people remain keeping a more conservative view about roles in the family, and couples are

still holding rather deep-rooted and traditional expectations towards their partners. Men are expected to take on the role of main decision-maker and to protect and provide for their wives and children. This male role and function will assure them of dignity and sense of achievement in the eyes of themselves and their families. Women, in addition to their careers or jobs, are expected to take on the role as the main carer of the family in terms of child-raising, education, peacemaker to prevent or resolve conflict in the family, or even trivial matters of the household. Therefore, it is not unusual to see career women rushing home from work to prepare a meal for the family and look after their children's schoolwork. Obviously, there is still a long road for a change in the role expectations for both men and women and a genuine recognition of equal partnership between men and women in the family.

With layoffs and the unemployment rate reaching unprecedented high levels, men's identity as protector and provider to the family has been severely challenged once they lose their jobs and cannot get employed again. Compared to women, men receive more social and psychological pressure from being

unemployed: such as addressing questions from neighbours about hanging around. In addition, the adjustments to change in gender roles in taking up responsibilities which are expected to be those of woman in a household, further create identity crises. Failure to survive the crises might lead to power struggles and result in growing marriage breakdown and even family violence. Women would also experience adjustment difficulties to the loss of a protector and provider, from whom they used to find their security. They also have to face the pressure of taking up both roles of protector as well as breadwinner, since it is relatively easier for women to secure a job than men in time of low economy.

In view of all the above needs for women as well as for men in adjusting to all the societal and economic changes, services provided to families range from the provision of basic care to role adjustment and enhancement of self-esteem. At one end of the spectrum, tangible services such as childcare and after-school care assist families in child-caring functions while the parents might go out to work. At the other end, counselling and supportive groups for different targets such as women, men, single parents, etc., are provided, aiming at enhancement of self-esteem, adjustment to role changes, as well as provision of mutual support during crises. Along the spectrum are other services such as employment service, job-skills training, parents' education, seminars and workshops, etc.

The function of a family is mainly organised by the interactive relationship of both sexes with their clearly defined roles in the family. Under the social and economic turmoil in Hong Kong, the definition of role and expectation for both sexes is yet to receive further challenge and test over time.

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND AND POLYNESIA

Aotearoa New Zealand has been home to the Polynesian Maori people for about one thousand years; their basic unit was the extended family (whanau) of several generations living communally in fortified villages (pa), until European colonisation.

Wearing a basic garment woven from flax, the women worked at their many tasks with a baby tied to their backs and

children at their sides, teaching the many skills essential to the weaving of clothes and artefacts from dyed fibres. The older women (kuia) carry in their memories the designs unique to their own tribe, passing the precious knowledge through generations.

Oral tradition has brought to the present days, essential knowledge of berries,

roots, leaves and bark which have saved lives and enhanced health for centuries. Women are also the transmitters of lively action songs with graceful gestures, and the rich legacy of songs and legends, now preserved in printed form.

A complex situation exists in Aotearoa New Zealand today. Our largest city Auckland (population one million plus) is

home to more Pacific Island people than anywhere else, from at least eight island cultures, none with traditions of written language. The past decade has seen a tidal wave of immigrants "from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe" – at least one South Auckland primary school has an incredible eighty nationalities represented on its roll! For families from cultures with bookish tradition, adjustment to a new way of life is comparatively straightforward

compared with the problems posed by a totally oral and representational (carving and weaving) history.

Maori continue to struggle with reading and writing skills along with newer Polynesian settlers. Thankfully, scores of well-qualified, utterly dedicated women (and of course some men! but fewer) are presently working to create a major success story for thousands of families

needing help. Training for empowerment of parents with minimal literacy has been carefully planned: the aim is to convince doubtful parents that they do have the ability to be teachers of their children.

The "Parents as Teachers" initiative requires huge commitment from all concerned; it is expensive in terms of money and women-power – lack of male Polynesian teachers/role models is acute. Workshops are run for ethnic groups of parents in their own languages, then parents come into classrooms working with qualified co-teachers. Dedication is too weak a word for the total effort extended by these teachers who nurture parents into believing in themselves as teachers, while teaching full-time themselves.

For professional women (often parents themselves, some Maori/Pacific Islanders, some European) to contribute so selflessly to the empowerment of whole families, ultimately raising the expectations and status of entire communities, is surely an extraordinary contribution to society, to many cultures and our nation.

Praise God that it is happening every day.

CANADA

The role of women in the family in 2002 has never seemed harder to define. In Canada, more women than ever work outside the home and struggle to maintain the 1950's view of what the woman's place in the family is. We need to have two incomes to support the high cost of raising a family in the 21st century. We also feel the need to maintain the illusion of the perfectly-run household that we remember from our childhood. The way our mothers kept house is the way we think it must still be done and we often over-extend ourselves trying to do all and be all. One of the biggest challenges today for women is this balance between family and work. Every woman I know either works outside the home or donates huge amounts of time to volunteer. The massive government cutbacks that Ontario has had to face in the last decade in education and healthcare has resulted in the urgent need for the public to volunteer their time and talents to make up the shortfall. Mothers of school-age children spend hours in the schools helping students and teachers. Healthcare cutbacks mean more of us are dealing with ageing parents as well as the "sandwich"

generation. Women are also having their families later in life, trying to balance well-established careers with motherhood. The older generation is often involved in child-care either due to divorce or to help with expenses.

Where does the Church fit into all of this? As a Mothers' Union member, I see how MU is working to help mothers in African nations with literacy programs, child care programs, health care clinics, orphanages, and income-producing projects. In Canada, we do not see the Church or Mothers' Union helping in such an organised way. We have become used to the government providing for our social concerns and we are ill-equipped to deal with things when funding is cut or removed. Slowly, however, the Church is stepping in to help fill the gaps. Many churches now offer daycare programs, breakfast and lunch programs for harried and hurried mothers, after-school programs for latch-key kids. Support for women is offered by many Mothers' and Tot groups, speakers, retreats and food baskets in times of crisis. The primary role of the Church is still to provide

spiritual guidance and this is ultimately the best way to help women and their families. The strong foundation of Jesus gives us the strength we need to juggle our crazy lives. Raising our children in a Christian family is our most important job. The role of women in the families of today has indeed changed and continues to change. We are not like our mothers and our daughters will not be like us. The source of strength in families, however, has always been and continues to be the mother. We are the secret strength of all societies. The founder of the Mothers' Union, Mary Sumner, knew this to be true 125 years ago. She said, "I felt that mothers had one of the greatest and most important professions in the world." She also said, "Be yourself what you would have your child to be." That is what God expects us to do, with His help.

I write from the perspective of a middle class urban parish.

In the 1950s, if a woman chose to marry and have children she was expected to give up her career and be a full-time mother, wife and homemaker. Should she be widowed, or divorced, she would need to find employment, often at a wage about half of her former husband's because she hadn't established herself as a professional woman.

The Church was the hub of social activities. People had time to spare and willingly volunteered it to be teachers on Sunday and club leaders throughout the week: badminton, tennis, youth group, Scouts, Guides, Junior Chancel Guild, etc. The single mother, especially, is greatly aided by the Church.

Now women are expected to strive for as much education as possible and to establish themselves in a career. The average age for marriage and child-bearing is higher than formerly. Now it is the norm for mothers to work outside the home. It takes two salaries to pay the mortgage on an urban home. Childcare before and after school is an ongoing challenge which is met in several ways:

- The mother and father work flexible hours, so "cover" this time of day.
- A nanny is hired.
- The child is placed in day-care allied with the school, often at great expense.

The Church's role is the same: to teach on Sundays and promote social opportunities during the week. However the leadership no longer comes from volunteers: the parents are over-stressed and over-worked so the church budget now includes salaries for Sunday School teachers, crèche caregivers, and youth group leadership. Of necessity, these jobs are part-time and low paid. It is a constant challenge to find committed and talented staff. Very few children attend Sunday School week by week so "special teaching days" are advertised well in advance so families can be in church for children to learn the essentials of the faith.

In summary, the woman's role in the family is the same now as a generation ago with the addition of being a wage earner. The Church is adjusting in order to teach the Gospel.

St. Paul's Family Support Project is located on the boundary of Liverpool; it is an outer estate area to the north west of the city. The total population is at present 9,500 which represents about 3,500 households, 35% of these have children and of that number 28% are of lone parent families and 44% are households with no adult in employment.

Nearly five years ago the parishioners of St. Paul's set up the project in response to the perceived needs in the area. These included isolation of single parents, an increase in vandalism and petty crime, and the lawlessness of ever-younger children. The aim was to help families before they reached crisis point. With the help of various grants, a full-time Family Support Worker was employed to begin the work in the area.

Our work includes:-

- Adults, Babies and Children Group (ABC)
- Out of School Care
- Free crèche facilities, to enable mothers to attend courses
- Parenting Skills (7 week course)
- Kids Café
- Stressbusters

Most users are women. We aim to offer a warm, friendly and caring environment where women can develop and grow in confidence and gain a belief in their own self-worth. To achieve this our approach is to form lasting one-to-one relationships. We often find women come to our ABC group who are often at home all week with a young family. We offer care, advice and encouragement. On a practical note we arrange for various agencies to come and talk also on a one-

to-one basis. These include a Lone Parent Advisor, Adult Guidance and the local Health Visitors.

This method works very well. If we make the women in our care feel comfortable with us they will try new challenges. We encourage them to take up courses in areas such as Basic English and Maths Skills, and Computer Courses, for which we offer a free crèche. Also the Parenting Skills Courses have been a great success, a certificate is awarded at the end of each course: sometimes this is the first one they may have ever received. Many parents completing the course come and tell us they enjoy a better relationship with their families.

We have had many successes. At the moment three women are in the process of completing their degrees after attaining an Access to Higher Education Course held at the Project. Another of our ABC Leaders is about to start her Midwifery Course out of 1800 people who applied and fulfil her lifelong ambition. Our main aim is not only to encourage academic achievements but to help women take control of their lives by empowering them to have the confidence in their own abilities.

Our philosophy is simple; we take small steps and build on them with simple love, acceptance and encouragement. Often our work can seem like a drop in the ocean or a small ripple in a pond but when you look back it is amazing how far the ripple can spread.

In the late 1950s – early 1960s, there was a popular series on television called “Leave it to Beaver”. An icon of white suburbia, it showed a stable family with a stay-at-home mother, a hard working father, and two children. And this was indeed, for years, the ideal picture of a woman and her family. The realities of poverty, racism, or any struggles outside the white middle-class were invisible or ignored.

But with Vietnam, increased cries for social justice, the encounter movement, and changes in the economy, this model, while still held as an ideal by many, became the exception rather than the norm. Today, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, 22% of the families in the United States with young children are headed by single women. And it is considered the

exception for a woman not to work outside the home.

Consider Barbara, a divorced social worker with a young daughter who has severe learning disabilities. Barbara has lost several jobs because unexpected emergencies related to her child have made her miss too much work. Now she, too, is facing medical problems. Somehow she survives through working for non-profits, although the income from these sources is unreliable.

Then there is Nancy. Nancy is in her second marriage and has one child with another on the way. A full-time office assistant, she seldom sees her husband since his job often requires him to work at night.

Or Hattie, whose husband died several

years ago. Hattie holds together a large extended family, including a son who has been in and out of prison, and provides stability for all her grandchildren.

Elizabeth is the head of a medium-size business and her husband, a writer, works at home and is the parent who spends the most time with their children.

All of these are Episcopalians (Anglicans), and all of their stories are a little different. But these women give a sense of the strength and changing place of women in the United States today.

are trying their best in their own capacity to address domestic violence, specially against women.

Lady Kidu, Port Moresby South MP, said "Papua New Guinea needs "new age" men who can give their woman a life that is fair in partnership and at the workplace and is free of violence and abuse." (Reported in Post Courier, January 31st 2002). Moreover, Lady Kidu confirmed the traditional PNG woman as having endless patience and perseverance and a difficult and unhealthy life. In contrast, for the modern woman to continue to conform at home is an enormous waste of human resources. The contemporary PNG woman needs to find courage and to develop qualities to fully exercise her potential to the fullest in the society.

The South Pacific Post Managing Director also added that men need to change their attitudes towards women. Men had to abandon a life of alcoholism, violence and abuse, and respect the opposite sex.

Furthermore, the World Health Organisation reported in March 2002 that PNG has the world's second highest rate of violence against women. It states that 51.6% have been physically assaulted, not including sexual abuse or rape. Calls have been made to push for proper legislation and networking to address this problem.

The first PNG woman Justice, Catherine Devani, described the problem as a cancer destroying families and added that the present legislation dealing with domestic violence is outdated, and courts should establish close relationships with the police and welfare services to assist the victims.

It is obvious that many women and men suffer domestic violence quietly. Tradition is the excuse used. Victims do not speak up and live the perfect-pretence life which sometimes ends in death.

Some of these victims are illiterate and some educated Anglican members who find themselves being assaulted, abused or ill treated. These were the findings of the 1990 South Pacific Mothers' Union conference held in Popondetta, Oro Province. Delegates for this conference came from Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG. I am pretty sure that if another similar meeting is held in the region to address violence in the life of church women, similar findings would be made. Certainly domestic violence is one of the main hindrances in the life and development of women in PNG.

Various church groups have programmes to address domestic violence, but the cancer continues to spread throughout PNG society. The people involved in these inhuman acts need healing to their minds, attitudes and life as a whole. Thanks to the good Lord who takes care and assures

The Cancer of Domestic Violence

One does not have to carry out extensive research to find out whether the Melanesian society in PNG experiences domestic violence. As generally defined, domestic violence is supposedly a household or family experience. However today we see this extended to places like organisations, offices, sports fields, church groups and many more.

Domestic violence comes in many forms to all walks of women in PNG. It may come to the illiterate housewife as her husband bashing her physically, sexually

assaulting or raping her, threatening her from taking part and being involved in decision-making at home or in many activities at the village level. On the other hand, the educated woman is threatened and sexually abused in the work place by male colleagues, superiors, not forgetting her educated husband. Culturally most women do not speak up because of fear of payback, shame or loss of career.

Is anybody doing anything about this sickness that is killing the innocent women of this country? Of course, there are individuals, groups and organisations who

the women in that small voice that "All will be well in the end" (Julian of Norwich). I will always remember when my close female relative was bashed to death five years ago because she spoke up against her husband's extra-marital affairs. May she rest in peace. The culprit was sentenced to less than three years and is a free man now.

To all women who, in one way or another, experienced or experience domestic violence, pray for God to give you courage and wisdom to speak up for your right so that other women may be encouraged and strengthened to do the same.

FLOWERS

I got flowers today.

It wasn't my birthday or any other special day.

We had our first argument last night, and he said a lot of cruel things that really hurt me.

I know he is sorry and didn't mean the things he said, because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today.

It wasn't our anniversary or any other special day.

Last night, he threw me into a wall and started to choke me.

It seemed like a nightmare.

I couldn't believe it was real.

I woke up this morning sore and bruised all over.

I know he must be sorry, because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today.

It wasn't Mother's Day or any other special day.

Last night, he beat me up again.

And it was much worse than all the other times.

If I leave him, what will I do?

How will I take care of my kids?

What about money?

I'm afraid of him and scared to leave.

But I know he must be sorry, because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today.

Today was a very special day.

It was the day of my funeral.

Last night, he finally killed me.

He beat me to death.

If only I had gathered enough courage and strength to leave him, I would not have gotten flowers today.

*Poem supplied by Julie Kavic,
Lae, PNG*

THE MOTHERS' UNION LITERACY AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Education is key to development. By educating women you empower them to influence the development within the family, community and nation. The Mothers' Union Literacy and Development Programme prioritises the education of women and girls who remain the most disadvantaged throughout the world.

"Research shows that educating women and girls is the single most effective strategy for reducing poverty."

Currently being piloted in three countries of great disadvantage and need, Burundi, Malawi and Sudan, the Mothers' Union is transforming the lives of men and women as they acquire literacy and numeracy skills. It is a locally-managed programme, involving 16 trainers, 200 facilitators and impacting the lives of 3,200 learners.

It is a participatory programme, facilitators use PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) tools which address the priorities identified by the learners. Literacy circles are engaging with development issues such as: HIV/AIDs, health, hygiene, nutrition, widows' rights, peace and reconciliation and income-generation. Not only are learners now able to read and write but they are also being empowered to engage with development issues that affect their communities. Learners have spoken proudly of the difference that the programme has made to their lives:

"I didn't know that an adult woman like me could hold a pen. Now I can read and write letters to my family. I can also now make beautiful baskets to sell. Before I could do nothing. Now I am proud of what I can do." (Rose)

"Now we shall sensitise others about the improved status of women. Women can now express their ideas and know their rights. We can participate in development. Widows can't be made homeless now. (Annonciata)

IAFN International Anglican Family Network

NEW ADDRESS FOR IAFN OFFICE

The Family Network office has moved. The address is:
IAFN Office, PO Box 54,
Minehead, Somerset TA24 7WD
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Tel/Fax: (+44) (0) 1643 841 500
E-mail: mail@iafn.org.uk

INTERNATIONAL ANGLICAN WOMEN'S NETWORK

The International Anglican Women's Network is one of the networks of the Anglican Consultative Council. IAWN is committed to linking Anglican women worldwide and, through link members in each Province, assessing what are the most pressing challenges facing women in 2002 and how each woman, and each country, can work to alleviate the suffering. This will mean dialogue and advocacy with local congregations and the worldwide Anglican Communion, with local governments and the United Nations. For further information write to: **International Anglican Women's Network, c/o Anglican Church Women, Diocese of Toronto, 135 Adelaide Street East, Toronto, ON M5C 1L8, CANADA.** or see our website www.iawn.org

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY GOD

bless all women with families throughout the world: and especially those who bear burdens which are exceptional or unfair;

enable them in all they undertake, encourage them as they put new learning into practice, empower them in taking responsibility in the home;

grant your heavenly grace that in their family life

women and girls may share equal esteem with men and boys know justice and love in their relationships, and enjoy your gifts of health, happiness and peace;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Rev. John Bradford

THE NEXT FAMILY NETWORK NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be on the theme of **The Burden of Care.**

This will cover issues of family members caring for sick, elderly, or disabled relatives; single parent families (both men and women); AIDS orphans being looked after by grandparents or other members of the extended family; and child-headed households. As always in IAFN newsletters, we want to hear of practical projects to help, as well as the problems. We are looking for articles 300-500 words long, and the initial deadline to receive material for this newsletter is **June 24th 2002.**

Visit the Family Network website:
www.anglicancommunion.org/iafn/

The Family Network is not a grant-giving organisation and is not able to respond to requests for financial help from either projects or individuals.

The views of individual contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the International Anglican Family Network.