



THE DELEGATION NEWS

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

www.friendshipamongwomen.org

members password: women67

MISSION STATEMENT

"The Delegation for Friendship Among Women is a non-political organization that nurtures friendship between women from the U.S. and other countries and seeks nuanced understanding of women's work and lives throughout the world.

The Delegation accomplishes its mission primarily by self-funded study trips to countries where formal relations with the U.S. are often in transition. Delegates meet with a variety of notable women with whom we exchange ideas and solutions, as well as links to relevant resources. Upon returning to the United States, Delegation members continue the purposeful dialogue with the women abroad and share knowledge and insights with other U.S. citizens through speeches and articles."

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Kim Harms, President

Dear Delegates,

One of the questions that may be on your mind as we prepare for our next visit Delegation visit to Poland is, "Is it safe to travel there with the war in Ukraine raging just across the border?". Since the safety of our Delegates is of utmost concern to us, we did a little research. The first place I look when it comes to safety is the United States (US) State Department's Travel Safety Rating. As of this month, here is the latest posting regarding Poland:

"Travel Advisory

July 26, 2023

Poland - Level 1: Exercise Normal Precautions

Exercise normal precautions in Poland.

Read the country information page for additional information on travel to Poland.

If you decide to travel to Poland: Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

Follow the Department of State on Facebook and Twitter.

Review the Country Security Report for Poland.

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel.

Prepare a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist."

Interestingly enough, France, Germany, and Belgium are rated as more dangerous, at a level 2. With that in mind, I found an interesting explanation as to why Poland would be considered safer than other European countries which have a greater buffer against the war zone. I found this explanation. I do realize that this is not a neutral source of information as it is a Travel Agency that would benefit from tourism to Poland, but when coupled with the State Department information, I found it interesting:

"Russia is using Ukraine as a warning bell, but it should not be confused with a desire to expand westward. Russia simply does not have the military structure to defeat the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) (both of which Poland is a part of) which is found west of Ukraine and Russia. NATO and the EU will not hesitate to take necessary sanctions against Russia. This is proven by the reaction of EU leaders and institutions; they all

strongly condemn Russia's acts of aggression toward Ukraine. They have already posed some major sanctions against Russia as a response, these sanctions include cutting Russia's access to EU capital markets, prohibiting Russian planes from entering EU airspace, and energy sanctions to make it harder and more expensive for Russia to upgrade their oil refinements. Follow all updates from a credible source; visit the CNN website. As a part of NATO, Poland is backed up by other NATO members through military support as well. As a precaution, some US Armed Forces and troops of other NATO members are stationed in Poland as well." (AB Poland Tours)

As we continue to plan for our next visit to Poland, please let us know if you have any special contacts there that would connect us with groups of women to whom we can be of service. Special thanks go out to our Delegation Planning Committee headed up by Dr. Carolyn Moats.

And a further thank you to Darlene Miller for her amazing work in getting our Delegation website rebooted.

With much excitement for our future as a Delegation.

Kim

DELEGATE PROFILE



Mary Pomeroy, Guide, Artie Lee Hinds, Cuba, 2002



Artie Lee Hinds, Leatta Hough, Madeline Obrien, Anna Marie Hildago, and Mary Pomeroy, Cuba, 2002

BOARD NEWS:

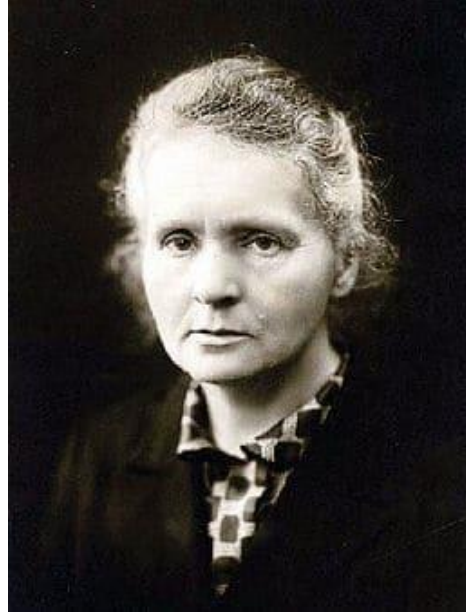
- The Board held its first retreat since the beginning of the pandemic in Arizona in February 2023. The focus of the retreat was The Delegation's next trip and reviving The Delegation Website.
- The Delegation's website has been totally revamped and updated. Thanks especially to Darlene Miller and Pete Kubitz for amazing efforts to bring the new website to fruition. While additional information is being added and tweaking continues, the website is now up and running. Please check it out – www.friendshipamongwomen.org.
- The next trip for The Delegation is being planned for May 2024. Our destination will be **Poland**. The Trip Planning Committee has been very busy working out the itinerary. The planning Committee includes Carolyn Moats, Pete Kubitz, Barbara Pritchard, Darlene Miller, and Cathi Smith. The travel company we will be using is Mir, the same company that gave us such a wonderful trip in Mongolia. Please watch your emails for more information.

POLAND



- Poland, officially the Republic of Poland, is a country in Central Europe. It is divided into 16 administrative provinces called voivodeships, covering an area of 313,931 km². Poland has a population of 38 million and is the fifth-most populous member state of the European Union. (Wikipedia)
- Capital: Warsaw
- Government: Democracy, Republic, Parliamentary republic
- Population: 37.75 million (2021) World Bank
- Official Language: Polish
- Continent: Europe
- Area: 124,547 mi²

List of 12 of the most incredible Polish women ever:



1) Maria Skłodowska Curie

She was born in Warsaw in 1867. She was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize and the only person to win in multiple sciences! She won 2 Nobel prizes, one in Physics and one in Chemistry respectively.



2) Irena Sendlerowa

She was one of the main Polish heroes during the II World War. This remarkable woman defied the Nazi German regime and saved over 2,500 Jewish children by smuggling them out of the

Warsaw Ghetto. She was a health worker, and she sneaked the children out between 1942 and 1943 to safe hiding places and found non-Jewish families to adopt them. She provided them with false identity documents and saved them from the Holocaust.



2) Agnieszka Holland

She was born in Warsaw in 1948, she is one of the most important Polish filmmakers ever. Her most famous film is “Europa Europa”. She had to emigrate to France after the Martial Law in Poland was imposed, and she was not able to see her daughter for over 8 months.



3) Chaja Rubinstein

She was born in Cracow in 1870 and she was a Polish-American business woman. She revolutionized the cosmetics industry, and a lot of women still use some of her cosmetics. She founded the company Helena Rubinstein Incorporated, then when she sold the company she became the first self-made female millionaire in the world.



4) Irena Szewińska

She was born in Russia, but 1 year after she was born her parents moved to Warsaw. She was a Polish sprinter, and she was one of the most successful and important athletes of all times, she was the queen of the Olympic games between 1964 and 1980.



5) Emilia Plater

She was a Polish noble-woman but also revolutionist from the lands of the partitioned Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. She is a heroine in Poland but also in Lithuania. She was considered a symbol of women fighting for the national cause.



6) Zofia Kossak-Szczucka

She was born in Końmin in 1889, she was an activist but also a writer. She created 2 organizations during the World War II designed especially to help Jews to escape the Holocaust.



7) Grażyna Bacewicz

She was born in Łódź in 1909. She was a Polish composer and violinist, and she is considered one of the most important Polish composers in the history.



8) Wanda Rutkiewicz

She was a Polish climber born in 1943. She was the first woman to successfully climb summit K2. She was the first Pole, and also the first European woman, to reach the summit of Mount Everest.



9) Krystyna Chojnowska-Liskiewicz

She was born in Warsaw in 1936 and she became the first woman in the history to sail single handed around the world. She sailed 57,719 km in just 401 days.



11) Wisława Szymborska

She was born in 1923, she won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1996. Many people consider her as the “Mozart of Poetry”.



12) Eliza Orzeszkowa

She was a Polish novelist and a one of the main writers of the Positivism in Poland movement during foreign Partitions. She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1905.

Link to original article: www.chido-fajny.com

Pictures: Public domain

❖ **For a real treat, listen to Gorecki's Third Symphony.**

From Wikipedia:

The **Symphony No. 3**, Op. 36, also known as the ***Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*** (Polish: ***Symfonia pieśni żałobnych***), is a symphony in three movements composed by Henryk Górecki in Katowice, Poland, between October and December 1976. Despite a political climate that was unfavorable to modern art (often denounced as "formalist" by the communist authorities), post-war Polish composers enjoyed an unprecedented degree of compositional freedom following the establishment of the Warsaw Autumn festival in 1956. [

A solo soprano sings Polish texts in each of the three movements.[3] The first is a 15th-century Polish lament of Mary, mother of Jesus; the second a message written on the wall of a Gestapo cell during World War II; and the third a Silesian folk song of a mother searching for her son killed by the Germans in the Silesian uprisings.[4] The first and third movements are written from the perspective of a parent who has lost a child, and the second movement from that of a child separated from a parent. The dominant themes of the symphony are motherhood, despair and suffering.



Cover of the 1992 release of Symphony No. 3, conducted by [David Zinman](#) with soprano [Dawn Upshaw](#)

MEMBER NEWS: Sad Tidings

Sylvia Ann Sabo, 1937-2022



SYLVIA SABO OBITUARY

Age 85, lived a remarkable life! The first child born to Sylvan and Agnes Lee in 1937, Sylvia Ann was a mischievous child with friendships she would maintain throughout her life and two siblings she adored. Sylvia attended St Olaf College in Northfield, MN, and although she hated the sight of blood, became a registered nurse.

While training for her career at Fairview Hospital in Minneapolis she met her future husband, Martin Olav Sabo, also from North Dakota. They met at an evening bonfire along the west bank of the Mississippi River. Following an initial proposal from Martin that Sylvia rescinded, she and a friend, also a nurse, hopped in Sylvia's VW bug and took a year-long road trip around the United States, financing the adventure as traveling nurses. Upon returning to Minneapolis, Sylvia and Martin were re-engaged and went on to have a wonderful marriage of 52 years and two daughters.

Sylvia was an active member of the Seward neighborhood in Minneapolis. She was a PTA president and participated in the Seward community orchestra, an assembly of amateur neighborhood musicians. Sylvia also enjoyed singing at Trinity Lutheran Church on Riverside Avenue. Peace Links, The Delegation for Friendship Among Women, N Street Village, and The Congressional Club were organizations in which Sylvia invested much time and effort on behalf of women in the U.S. and abroad.

Sylvia traveled as a nurse with Radiology Mammography International, providing traveling mammography equipment to remote villages and teaching women to do self-breast exams. Sylvia was a survivor of breast cancer.

Sylvia was preceded in death by husband, Martin Olav Sabo and brother John Lee. She is survived by daughters, Karin (Nicholas) Mantor and Julie Sabo; grandchildren, Emily (Josh)

Johnson, Thomas, John, and Sarah Mantor, Jakob and Oskar Baatrup-Sabo; sister, Margaret Bostelmann; and many close relatives and friends. Funeral service Monday, November 7 at Lakewood Cemetery Chapel, 10:00 AM service followed with a brunch and interment. Memorials preferred to Trinity Lutheran Church, 2001 Riverside Ave, Minneapolis MN 55454. www.Washburn-McReavy.com Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

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ON THE WEB

Delegation Facebook Page, Caroline Olstad, Delegate

<https://www.facebook.com/TheDelegationForFriendshipAmongWomen/>

Caroline asks that if you have photos or videos or anything else you would like to share, please send them her way. She also asks that you send any suggestions for other organizations that The Delegation can “like” to her as well. She will be updating the Facebook page periodically. caroline.e.olstad@gmail.com

Delegation Website

www.friendshipamongwomen.org

member password: women67

See interesting history over the past decades including countries we’ve visited, friendships we’ve made and photos from the many Delegation trips and accomplishments.

DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

We realize that not everyone is able to accompany The Delegation on any particular trip. However, we all still have the opportunity to make a difference in the many lives affected in countries The Delegation visits by making a donation. Such contributions allow all Delegates the opportunity to participate in our efforts. Since The Delegation is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, you can share your generosity by making a tax-deductible donation. We encourage everyone to join in and help make deeply needed improvements in all the countries we visit.

To donate, please send a check made out to The Delegation for Friendship Among Women, noting on the check which project you wish as a recipient. Donations should be mailed to:

Diane Dunning, Treasurer
300 Lewis Lane
Ambler, Pa. 19002

You will receive a receipt for tax purposes. Thanks for your help!!

DELEGATION TRIP UPDATES

ARMENIA

From: **The United Nations, Human Rights Commission, Office of the High Commissioner** (ohchr.org)

[Newsletter Editor's note: All spelling is as it appears in the United Nations Report.]

Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Commend Armenia on Continuing to Uphold International Obligations Despite the Conflict, Raise Questions on Violence against Women and Family Planning Services

13 October 2022

Summary

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women today concluded its consideration of the seventh periodic report of Armenia, with Committee Experts commending the State on continuing to uphold its international obligations despite the impact of the conflict, and asking about violence against women and family planning services.

Lia Nadaraia, Committee Expert and Country Rapporteur for Armenia, acknowledged Armenia's complex political, economic, and security constraints due to the impact of the pandemic, and the devastating impact of the conflict. She commended the country for the progress made, including for reform around promoting and protecting human rights, and for the State continuing to uphold its international obligations.

A Committee Expert congratulated Armenia on the progress made, including on the adoption of the relevant law against family violence and the signing of the Istanbul Convention. However, gender stereotyping in Armenia continued to be the main obstacle to the equality of women and men, and a cause for gender-based violence. What legislative measures would the State take against gender stereotyping and hate speech? When would hate speech, specifically on gender; domestic violence, including stalking; and marital rape and other sexual violence crimes be criminalised in the Penal Code?

One Committee Expert asked what measures were being taken to ensure women's access to medical services, specifically family planning services? Did the cases in which abortion was legal include cases of rape, or severe foetal abnormalities? Would the State party take measures to ensure the provision of necessary specialists in all regions of the country?

The delegation said relevant provisions to combat domestic violence against women were included in the Criminal Code. Concerning sexual stereotypes, Armenia had initiated a number of awareness raising events, including posters and short television advertisements with famous personalities, to break down traditional family stereotypes and show the typical family as one that was full of love. Armenia was committed to undertaking the necessary steps to combat gender-based violence. Public awareness campaigns were also conducted to prevent violence against women.

Medical assistance for women of reproductive age during pregnancy and birth was provided for free, regardless of their social status or where they lived. The Government of Armenia had confirmed a programme for supporting reproductive health, and had allocated funds to implement this. This included providing services to high-risk groups and reproductive technology tests for specific population groups. Abortions were conducted at the request of women for medical reasons. There were also social indications such as incest and rape, for which women could conduct abortions.

Introducing the report, Tatevik Stepanyan, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia and Head of Delegation, said the preparation of the seventh periodic report of Armenia coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic situation and the pre-planned large-scale military offensive unleashed by Azerbaijan in September 2020 against the Nagorno Karabakh people. The last three years had been difficult for the country, due to the pandemic and the consequences of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan. Despite the challenges faced, tremendous work had been done which aimed at solving sectoral problems. Due to the amendments to the Electoral Code, the minimum quota threshold in the National Assembly elections was set at 30 per cent for female candidates.

In concluding remarks, Ms. Stepanyan said Armenia would continue to move forward and work towards eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. Armenia was looking forward to continuing collaboration with the Committee for a better and more peaceful future.

Ana Pelaez Narvaez, Committee Vice Chairperson, thanked the delegation for the constructive dialogue, saying it allowed the Committee to better understand the situation of women and girls in Armenia. The Committee congratulated Armenia on its progress, encouraging the State to adopt all recommendations of the Committee.

The delegation of Armenia consisted of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure; the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; the Ministry of Defence; the Commission on Television and Radio; the Statistics

Committee; the Health and Labour Inspectorate; the Armenian Police; the Migration Service; the Education Inspectorate; and the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's eighty-third session is being held from 10 to 28 October. All the documents relating to the Committee's work, including reports submitted by States parties, can be found on the session's [webpage](#). The webcast of the Committee's public meetings can be accessed via the [UN Web TV webpage](#).

THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

From: **Georgia Today**, March 18, 2021

Op-Ed by Nugzar B. Ruhadze
in [Newspaper](#), [OP-ED](#), [Politics](#)

Recognizing the Working Women beyond Politics



The story of Georgia is like a bestselling thriller intrigue, keeping the pot boiling from cover to cover: as one protest ends in the street, be ready for another the next afternoon; when one celebrity is taken into custody, behold, there goes another one to the reformatory; as soon as one scandal of a personal nature explodes on our ever-shimmering television screens, there starts brewing another, even a more rousing one. This and other samples of our societal ups and downs fill our informational space on an everyday basis, so much so that the overall impression, formulated from what we read, hear and see via the media, is that the country has stopped moving, all is hopelessly bad, and the nation is on the verge of a catastrophe, expected to crash on our poor heads in any possible twinkle of an eye. The news pieces

of the nation's social, business, cultural, economic and industrial character have become sporadic in the realm of mass communication.

Meanwhile, believe it or not, the country is working. People tend to be creative, and the youth is trying to live up to contemporary demands and expectations. Only we, the regular folks, know nothing about it! One of the clearest examples of the nation's movement forward with promising research potential and a considerable scientific bottom-line is the fact that the Georgian Academy of Natural Sciences (GANS), headed by its president, Professor Paata Kervalishvili, in collaboration with the Georgian Young Scientists' Association (GYSA), has formed a group to support women in research and science, which is led by young bio-medical geneticist Anna Kekelidze. The support group for female scientists includes the women who work in various fields of science, and are experts in research and technology, social science or legal matters. The team is focused on developing socially beneficial strategies, and improving the research skills of women, which has been recognized as one of the strongest national priorities.

Women in Georgia remain a minority in science and technology. The number of Georgian women in research and development is far behind the EU and US, where women make up 33% of researchers in this field. Incidentally, in the former soviet bloc countries, about 40% of researchers were women. This was a legacy of the consistent investment in education by the socialist governments that was in place until the early 1990s. Georgia's current growth strategy is to enhance the socio-economic role of women. Consequently, the selection criteria for research grants, universities and other donors should take into consideration the proportion of women among teaching researchers.

Georgia is certainly taking a number of affordable measures to integrate young female scientists into its research and innovation strategy. However, the continued lack of representation of women at the top level of entrepreneurship and faculties, management and science decision-making indicates that we still have to go another mile. For instance, less than 10% of female membership in GANS might serve as a vivid corroboration of this appreciable piece of advice, but it is also true that Paata Kervalishvili and Anna Kekelidze have created a wonderful paradigm of generational cooperation in matters scientific and technological, benefitting the national progress. By the way, the democratic development which has become a household word in our freedom-of-speech-hungry Georgia, is something wonderful, but it is not everything. Scientific development might be even more important for the nation's future. In a word, we need qualified labor more than politics of any degree and qualification. In Georgia, if we hear a female voice on the radio, or see a female face on the television, they inevitably belong to either a politician or a journalist. We barely even know of the women in this country who are outstanding researchers, technologists, doctors, teachers, authors, translators, engineers, inventors or entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, these people are doing a great job, each of them in their own place, but the media has little idea of their life and value, as if this nation has nothing else to do except politics. Well, be it as it is, but it is time to give preference to what matters more and deserves higher recognition. Laughing this off might turn this nation into a subject of cruel mockery someday.

From **FP** (foreignpolicy.com)

[Argument](#): An expert's point of view on a current event

Living While Female in Mongolia

The country has some of the worst rates of sexual violence in Asia—and old attitudes are proving hard to change.

By [Julia Duin](#), February 14, 2020, 8:09 AM



A Mongolian woman walks along a road on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar on July 13, 2016. Wang Zhao/Getty Images

Wearing a sleeveless black dress and with her brown hair gracefully swept into a chignon, Solongo sipped some tea in an office in downtown Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and slowly spoke about what happened when she was 18. While walking home from church next to the hodgepodge of homes and yurts crammed into the hilly areas north of the city, a man grabbed her, threatened to kill her, and then raped her.

“I didn’t call police. It was my secret,” the now 38-year-old, who asked to go by a pseudonym for her safety, said in July. Solongo berated herself for walking through a dangerous area instead of taking a bus—such self-blame is not uncommon among Mongolian women. Years

later, her husband didn't believe her when she told him about the attack. The two separated after he had an affair. She has no job; her sons are 8 and 11, and they are acting out. Her counselor, Yanjmaa Jutmaan, 41, listened intently as Solongo described her problems.

"Personal counseling is almost an unknown concept in Mongolia," Jutmaan said later. I was in Mongolia helping her write an autobiography about her journey from being an abused teenager in 1990s Ulaanbaatar to the country's first female college chancellor. In recent years, she's pivoted toward helping abused women. "Most Mongolians dismiss it as only for the mentally ill. We are a closed, introverted people. Suicide and sex abuse rates are high. Our temperatures range from minus 40 degrees to plus 40 [Celsius]. It's a poor country, and life here is hard." Like many Mongolian women I spoke to, Jutmaan has experienced sexual abuse as well. She believes it is time for her country to tackle the rampant abuse of women head-on.

In 2017, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) did a first-ever survey on gender-based violence in Mongolia, which has a population of over 3.1 million. Key findings, which were released in June 2018, showed that Mongolia had one of the higher rates in Asia of sexual violence at the hands of people who were not their victims' partners. One out of three women there (31.2 percent) who had ever been in a relationship had experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a partner in their lifetime. The most dangerous place is the home, followed by out on the streets. One out of 10 women said she was sexually abused before the age of 15. Two major triggers were jealousy and alcohol consumption by their partners. Abuse ranged from being hit, slapped, pushed, shoved, choked, and burned to being threatened with a gun. And in the landlocked country, where raising livestock is common way to make a living, nearly 1 percent of women reported being chased by a horse or lashed with a whip by their partners.

Abuse is by no means constrained to Mongolia's poor, rural areas.

The same week the U.N. results were announced at a press conference in Ulaanbaatar, Dorjdogar Gantulga, a member of the Mongolian parliament, resigned after being accused of raping a 25-year-old female student—he has since been sentenced to two years in prison. A month later, Mongolia launched a #HeForShe Campaign, which is part of an international movement for gender equality led by the U.N. Jutmaan, who lent her expertise to the cause as a statistician, thinks the rate of sexual abuse may be well over a third of all Mongolian women, the estimate given in the U.N. report. "It's the common experience here," she said. "It's shame, shame, shame. Society blames the woman. Everyone has sexual problems, and marital rape is common.

As the mother of four sons, "it's hard to raise boys to be gentle toward women, because the whole society is against it," Jutmaan added. "Domestic violence wasn't even a crime here until 2017." Normally, Jutmaan, who has a doctorate in mathematics from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and has worked as a senior analyst for the Mongolian government in cybersecurity, policy, and data analysis, would be a prime candidate for a high-level

government job. But she has chosen a less visible road helping the women of her country who have faced abuse. Hoping to eventually help such women full time, she is trying to raise the money for a new Christian counseling center on land she and her husband bought near the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park about 30 miles east of Ulaanbaatar. Her center would support the recent spate of One Stop Service Centers, which are a combination women’s shelter and medical clinic where abused women can also access legal and psychological services. They can live with their children there for up to 72 hours. Since the report came out, the UNFPA has built several One Stop centers around the country. The 15th opened this past November.

But most observers acknowledge that the centers will never be enough. “It is time in Mongolia to work not just for female empowerment, but to work with boys and young men,” said Ariunzaya Ayush, the chairperson of the National Statistics Office in Mongolia who helped put together the UNFPA report. Dressed in a copper-colored Mongolian *deel* the day I saw her in July, Ayush occupies a spacious third-floor office in a government building one block from Sukhbaatar Square, the city’s main plaza. Her grandfather, Puntsagiin Jasrai, was prime minister from 1992 to 1996.

“It all begins at the home,” she said. “Thirty-three percent of the boys are physically punished versus 23 percent of the girls. Parents statistically spend more time with girls. They pay less attention to boys and punish the boys more. Boys are also less educated. The Mongolian culture says men have to be heroes. Boys don’t cry. They have to be strong.”

That idea encourages the men to keep their women in line, which leaves the way wide open for abuse. There’s also a strong emphasis on family honor, which works against reporting one’s relatives or spouses as physical or sexual abusers, she added, citing a popular saying: “It is better to have your bones broken than your name dishonored.”

RWANDA



8 Rwandan Women Rising

[Rwanda Inclusive Security](#) • July 8, 2017



Women saved Rwanda after genocide, creating a model for lasting security in countries worldwide. How they did it, and the difference they've made, holds lessons for the US and countries around the world.

In the spring of 1994, the tiny African nation was ripped apart, leaving nearly a million dead. After the violence subsided, Rwanda's women—drawn by the necessity of protecting their families—carved out unlikely new roles for themselves, creating stability and reconciliation in devastation's wake.

Duke University Press has just published Inclusive Security Founder and Chair **Swanee Hunt's** new book, *Rwandan Women Rising*, which tells the stories of dozens of women who worked for peace after the genocide. Today, nearly 64% of the seats in the Rwandan parliament are held by elected women, a number unrivaled by any other nation.

How did they succeed? Meet eight of these extraordinary women and you will find commonalities. At a time of cultural chaos, each one stepped forward to help. Each found ways to use her professional capabilities and collaborate in ever-broadening circles of responsibility. And each contributed to rebuilding the nation.

"On every continent, there are countries where a dramatic increase in women's influence has led to a peaceful foreign policy, higher education levels, longer life expectancy, safer streets, even cleaner water," writes Jimmy Carter in the book's foreword. "These gains aren't coincidental."

Swanee was joined by one of these women, widows' organization founder Chantal Kayitesi, at a book launch event at the Cambridge Forum on June 13.

CHANTAL KAYITESI



Chantal Kayitesi was a 29-year-old college student with an infant son when the Rwandan genocide started. Her husband, parents, two siblings, and many extended family members were killed. In 1995, she cofounded an organization to aid widows and orphans. She joined a coalition that advocated for qualifying rape, other forms of sexual violence, and torture as crimes against humanity. In 1999, she immigrated to the US where she cofounded a survivors' organization.

ODETTE NYIRAMILIMO



Odette Nyiramilimo recalls that professional opportunities for women were rare when she was growing up. Still, she managed to become a physician and survived the genocide under truly harrowing conditions. She was among those profiled in Philip Gourevitch's 1998 book, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with our Families*.

After 1994, while practicing as an obstetrician and gynecologist, she counseled rape victims and widows and participated in various women's associations to rebuild the country.

She served as minister of state for Social Affairs from 2000-2003. Elected to the Senate in 2008, she chaired the committee for human rights, social affairs, and petitions.

CHRISTINE TUYISENGE



Attorney Christine Tuyisenge worked nearly 15 years for the rights of women and of children in Rwanda through the nonprofit legal aid organization Haguruka. She contributed to the amendment of discriminatory laws, helped establish shelters for abused women, and coordinated legal assistance throughout the country.

Since 2008, she has served as vice president of the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide and also as executive secretary—the senior career staff member—of the National Women's Council, a forum that empowers women to participate effectively in development programs countrywide, from village to national levels.

FATUMA NDANGIZA



Fatuma Ndagiza has promoted reconciliation, gender equality, and good governance from both inside and outside the Rwandan government. As executive secretary for the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission after the genocide, she helped Rwandans come to terms with the past and collectively search for sustainable peace.

From 1994-2002, she championed women's rights to access economic opportunities and participate in decision-making. She led women's NGOs and chaired a task force that established the National Women's Councils.

Currently, she is deputy CEO for the Rwanda Governance Board and chair of the African Peer Review Panel of Eminent Persons, which monitors national governance processes.

AISA KIRABO KACYIRA



As a veterinarian, Aisa Kirabo Kacyira found an important role immediately after the genocide, working with women who had little experience taking care of cattle but had to learn quickly after losing their husbands. She was elected to parliament and also served as mayor of Kigali and governor of Rwanda's largest province (with a population of 2.5 million). Under her leadership, Kigali won the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honor Award in 2008 for achievements in environmental sustainability and improved living conditions. In 2011, Ms. Kacyira was appointed by the UN Secretary General to serve as UN Habitat's deputy executive director.

BEATRICE MUKASINE



Beatrice Mukasine was a young high school teacher in Rwanda's Southern Province when schools closed during the genocide. Afterwards, she reunited displaced children with families, locating their own or finding adoptive parents.

For five years, she devoted her time to children's and women's rights, initially through emergency response efforts and then on longer-term projects. She helped establish social development committees throughout the country, raising awareness about changes in the law that allowed women to inherit property. She rose to serve as president of the National Women's Council.

ALICE KAREKEZI



Lawyer Alice Karekezi is known for spearheading a coalition against gender-based violence that led to the labeling of incitement of rape as a crime of genocide. But her work is much broader. As a lecturer at the National University's Faculty of Law in Kigali since 1996, she has researched *gacaca*, an indigenous mechanism reintroduced for the pursuit of both justice and reconciliation. She drew on her work with women who survived sexual violence and her experience as a gender monitor for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Ms. Karekezi cofounded the Center for Conflict Management at the National University, heading the justice, human rights, and governance program.

ODA GASINZIGWA



Minister of Gender and Family Promotion Oda Gasinzigwa, born in Tanzania to Rwandan refugee parents, joined others in the struggle to reconstruct Rwanda after the genocide. In 1998, officials at the gender ministry selected her to work with the National Women's Council Secretariat. In 2004, she was elected President of the National Women's Council, where she promoted gender equality and women's participation in all aspects of national development. From 2005 to 2009 she represented women on the Rwandan Government's National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, which coordinates activities in

communities and schools to promote peace and eradicate divisions among Rwandans. In 2008, the government nominated her to head the Gender Monitoring Office, which was constitutionally established to monitor implementation of gender principles throughout the country.

[You can read their stories in *Rwandan Women Rising*.](#)

EDITOR'S SIGN-OFF

Thank you all for your contributions. I would especially like to thank those who have responded so positively to my requests to include them in the "Delegate Profiles". The newsletter would not exist without the help of all of you. Please continue to send me items, and please include any news about yourself that you would like to share. It is such a delight to edit this newsletter. I look forward to meeting and traveling with you wherever we go next.

All my best wishes, Susan
smccrawhelms@cox.net

With thanks to **Desiree Hannah**, our talented technical editor.