



AAUW

NEW YORK STATE

My Sister's Keeper

I am my sister's keeper.

We are in this together.

Not to win

Not to compete

Not to conquer

But to educate

To nurture

To help.

We are each other's keeper.

Let us celebrate

The power within us all

To make the difference

To change the world!

—Dr. Natasha Josefowitz

"My Sister's Keeper" program is an AAUW statewide project to foster greater awareness and understanding of the plight of women worldwide and within our domestic borders. The project aims to turn women's concerns into venues for local and international action. Melissa Guardaro, NYS International Issues Director from Rockland Co. Branch, and Joan Monk, NYS Cultural Interests Director from Westchester Co. Branch, were inspired by Dr. Josefowitz's poem to prepare this guide of information, suggestions and quotes for use by branches. It is hoped that each New York State branch will combine the resources of Diversity/Cultural Interests/International Affairs/Public Policy and Programming, beginning for a two-year period from July 2010 to June 2012. Individuals, interest groups, and branches are encouraged to develop programming, volunteering, advocacy, and education outlets for women suffering from issues of gendercide, violence, lack of educational opportunities, poor maternal health care, diminished rights of women, and lack of gender equality.

Learn More About the Need to Be

My Sister's Keeper

Gendercide

*"More than 100 million women are missing."
Martya Sen, New York Review of Books, 1990*

Gendercide is gender-selective mass killing. The term was first used by Mary Anne Warren in her 1985 book, *Gendercide: The Implications of Sex Selection*. Gendercide is the deliberate extermination of persons of a particular sex (or gender.) Other terms, such as "gynocide" and "femicide" have been used to refer to the wrongful killing of girls and women. The term also calls attention to the fact that gender roles have often had lethal consequences, and that these are in important respects analogous to the lethal consequences of racial, religious, and class prejudice. The most widespread form of femicide is in the form of sex-selective infanticide in cultures with strong preferences for male offspring. (Wikipedia)

Please note that these policies are not carried out solely by men. In some areas women use their power in the family to favor boys by taking them quickly to the doctor for medical attention, selectively vaccinating their sons and not their daughters, providing education first for boys, and feeding boys before girls.

Human Trafficking/Violence Against Women

Millions of women in the third world are enslaved in forced labor, including sexual servitude. The International Labor Organization estimates that there are 12.3 million people engaged in forced labor of all kinds.

"All of us – men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders – have a responsibility to help end violence against women." UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Human trafficking is one of the worst forms of violence against women and girls because traffickers commonly use violence to intimidate the victims. Once recruited, women find themselves isolated and often suffer extreme physical and mental abuse and brutality at the hands of the traffickers. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, human trafficking cuts across human rights, peace and security, development and family health. In the most basic sense, it is about preserving the fabric of society. With a better understanding of why women in particular are vulnerable to trafficking and how traffickers operate, and by providing the necessary legal and technical assistance to ensure that effective countermeasures are in place, this crime can be stopped. Eliminating gender discrimination and gender-based violence will enhance the dignity and human rights of women and girls and help prevent their being trafficked.

Education

“When education is distributed unequally in a society, economic growth almost never occurs and human talent is wasted – that is, a poor country's most valuable asset remains unproductive.”

– Director, David M. Kennedy Center of International Studies, Brigham Young University

Based upon research by Kristof and WuDunn, the poorest families in the world spend approximately 10 times as much (20% of gross income) on a combination of alcohol, prostitution, candy, sugary drinks, and lavish feasts as they do on education. If more money were spent on education, particularly education of girls, the family and the society at large would reap many benefits.

Women with formal education are much more likely to have smaller and healthier families. One year of schooling reduces fertility by 10 percent. An educated woman is more likely to seek medical care, get her children immunized, and adopt improved sanitation practices. Education increases income for wage earners and increases productivity for employers. A girl's education ranks among the most powerful tools for reducing a girl's vulnerability in contracting HIV/AIDS. A mother's education is a significant variable for her children's educational opportunities. Each year of formal education attained by the mother translates into her children's remaining in school an additional one-third to one-half year.

Maternal Health Care/Reproductive Rights

“One woman dies in childbirth for every 100,000 live births in Ireland. 2,100 women die

in childbirth for every 100,000 live births in Sierra Leone.” World Health Organization, 2007.

From the Center on Reproductive Rights:

- In 2005, more than half a million women died due to preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth. 70,000 women die annually due to complications from unsafe abortions.
- 100 to 140 million women have suffered female genital mutilation worldwide and an additional 3 million girls and women undergo the procedure each year.
- In 2007, 61% of the 22.5 million people in sub-Saharan Africa living with HIV were women, most of whom were infected by their husbands/sexual partners. Nearly 12 million children under 18 in the region have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Fifteen years ago, world leaders realized that reproductive rights are human rights and promised to take steps to address the reproductive health needs of women. Some progress has been made. More countries are including access to reproductive healthcare and the reduction of maternal mortality in their national policy agendas. Progress has been slow. Unacceptable numbers still die during childbirth and pregnancy, and almost all of those deaths are preventable.

Economic Empowerment

Studies have shown that when women hold the assets or gain an income, the money is spent on education, nutrition, medicine, food,

and housing. However, often women do not have access to assets or a means of making an income. The economic statistics are bleak: ONE percent of the world's landowners are women.

Microfinance is one way of fighting poverty. It puts credit, savings, insurance, and other basic financial services within the reach of poor people. The microfinance revolution started with the recognition that poor people need access to loans and that they could use these funds productively. It has also changed the perception that poor people are not credit-worthy. Records have shown that, instead, they are a good risk, with higher repayment rates than conventional borrowers. In some of the most successful microfinance institutions, repayment rates are as high as 98 percent.

Microcredit is the extension of very small loans (micro loans) to those in poverty designed to spur entrepreneurship. The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh is widely thought to be the originator and innovator in this area.

Women's Rights and Gender Equality

"Democracy means nothing if half the people can't vote, or if their vote doesn't count, or if their literacy rate is so low that the exercise of their vote is in question."

Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the

factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

Eleanor Roosevelt, US diplomat & reformer

"The oppression of women worldwide is the human rights cause of our time. And their liberation could help solve many of the world's problems, from poverty to child mortality to terrorism."

New York Times, August 23, 2009

The [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) is an international bill of rights for women. The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention in December 1979, and as of 2004, 179 countries had ratified it. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to foster greater equality. CEDAW is often referred to as the Women's Convention because, unlike conference declarations, it sets legally binding principles and standards for realizing women's rights. Unfortunately, the United States is one of the few countries NOT to have signed on, along with Sudan, Somalia, Qatar, Iran, Nauru, Palau, and Tonga. U.S. failure to ratify the Treaty undermines the powerful principle that human rights of women are universal across all cultures, nations, and religions, and worthy of being guaranteed through international human rights standards.

Connect More...

The main element of “My Sister’s Keeper” program is to have a state-wide read of *Half the Sky* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn.

“I think it is impossible to stand by and do nothing after reading *Half the Sky*. It does what we need most, it bears witness to the sheer cruelty that mankind can do to mankind.” George Clooney

Half the Sky has been described as essential reading for every global citizen. Prepare to become inspired to be a world advocate for women, truly “**My Sister’s Keeper.**” *Half the Sky* details the lives of extraordinary women who have triumphed over crushing circumstances to embrace their potential and help other women in their communities. According to a Chinese tale, women hold up half the sky, and in countries where women do not have access to education, health care, and food, half of the talent is squandered. “Women and girls aren’t the problem,” according to Kristof, “they are the solution.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/08/20/magazine/kristof-audioss/index.html> contains a slideshow narrated by the authors, and an overview of the book and issues.

- Read this book on your own, with friends, with your book group, as part of a branch-wide reading project. An informative and thought-provoking **discussion guide** from CARE.org is available at <http://www.care.org/downloads/care-half-the-sky-discussion-guide.pdf>
- Reading is only one method of incorporating *Half the Sky* into your programming. *Half the Sky LIVE!* was presented in movie theaters nationwide on March 4, 2010. This presentation celebrated International Women’s Day and included musical performances, celebrity commentary, and the world premiere of *Woineshet*, a powerful short film directed by Academy Award® Winner Marisa Tomei. The authors, Kristof and WuDunn, have devised other unique ways to communicate the message beyond the book, including an **online course** at <http://www.nytimesknownow.com/index.php/half-the-sky/> . Google “Half the Sky” and see what new and innovative programs are available.

Do More... AAUW New York State provides these ideas for you to independently evaluate and consider for your branch.

Use Your Power to Empower Other Women

Here is a list of programming ideas for your branch, civic projects for your community, advocacy organizations for assisting, and small efforts that require very little time ...and little money.

Support a Woman's business

- **Kiva** (www.kiva.org) - lets you connect with, and loan money to, unique small businesses in developing countries. Make a loan to an entrepreneur across the globe for as little as \$25. **Kiva** is the world's first online lending platform connecting online lenders to entrepreneurs.
- **Beads for Education** (www.beadsforeducation.org) - **BEADS** programs provide school scholarships for African girls, promote business development for African women and support conservation through education.
- **Global Giving** (www.globalgiving.org) – a million little earth changing ideas
- **Heifer International** (www.heifer.org) - Development organization with the mission of alleviating hunger, poverty, and environmental degradation through the provision of food producing animals to families in need.

Sponsor a Girl – A girl who gets an education will have fewer children, earn more money, and be able to help her siblings

- **Women for Women International** (www.womenforwomen.org) - Humanitarian organization dedicated to the educational, economic, and interpersonal support of women worldwide who are survivors of war and genocide

- **Plan USA** (www.planusa.org) - Plan is a nonprofit organization that has been helping children since 1937. You can make a donation or sponsor a child through Plan's child sponsorship
- **Pennies for Peace** (www.penniesforpeace.org) - By participating in Pennies for Peace you make a positive impact on a global scale, one penny at a time. Pennies for Peace is an international service-learning program sponsored by the Central Asia Institute founded by Greg Mortenson, author of "Three Cups of Tea." The Bath, NY branch has a Pennies for Peace project underway.
- **Save the Children** (www.savethechildren.org) - Works to create positive, lasting change in the lives of disadvantaged children in the United States and around the world.
- Support the **AAUW Education Fund**, develop a branch scholarship fund and increase those scholarships already in place.

Become an advocate: Citizen advocacy is essential to create change!

- **Care Action Network** (www.care.org) - The CARE Action Network, or CAN, is a group of CARE supporters working to educate our nation's leaders about issues of global poverty.
- **Family Philanthropy** – raise the next generation of philanthropists by modeling and encouraging generous giving in your local and global community.
 - **Philanthropy Favorites Booklist: For Adults:** *Raising Charitable Children* by Carol Weisman, *Giving* by William Jefferson Clinton, *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Stories for a Better*

World by Jack Canfield & Mark Victor Hansen, *Family Serve: Volunteer Opportunities for Families* by Mary Thoele, *The Power of Half: One Family's Decision to Stop Taking and Start Giving Back* by Kevin & Hannah Salwenn

➤ **Philanthropy Favorites Booklist: For Kids:**

A Kid's Guide to Giving by Freddi Zeiler, *The Giving Book: Open the Door to a Lifetime of Giving* by Ellen Sabin

➤ **Philanthropy Websites:**

○ **Learning to Give**

(www.learningtogive.org), Learning to Give educates youth about the importance of philanthropy, the civil society sector, and civic engagement. The Learning to Give Web site offers over 1,200 K-12 lessons and educational resources for teachers, parents, youth workers, faith groups and community leaders free of charge.

○ **The Chronicle of Philanthropy**

(www.philanthropy.com) News source for charity leaders, fund raisers, grant makers, and others involved in philanthropic enterprises

○ **Pay It Forward Foundation**

(www.payitforwardfoundation.org), The Pay It Forward Foundation was established in September 2000 by author Catherine Ryan Hyde and others to educate and inspire students to realize that they can change the world, and provide them with opportunities to do so. By bringing the author's vision and related materials into classrooms internationally, students and their teachers are encouraged to formulate their own ideas of how they can pay it forward.

○ **The Sunshine Lady**

www.sunshineladyfdn.org The Sunshine Lady Foundation is a private family foundation founded by Doris Buffett of Omaha, Nebraska. The foundation is entirely funded through Ms. Buffett's generosity and the mission reflects her values and beliefs. The mission of the Sunshine Lady Foundation is to invest in organizations and programs dedicated to providing opportunities for the advancement of education, well being and new life choices for disadvantaged people with special empathy for the working poor and families in crisis.

- **Common Cents** – Creators of the Penny Harvest (www.commoncents.org) this is an educational, not-for-profit organization, which specializes in creating and managing service-learning programs for young people. Their most popular and best known program is the Penny Harvest, the largest child philanthropy program in the United States.

○ Organize **book discussions** to raise awareness. Use the new International Book list on the AAUW New York State website <http://www.aauw-nys.org/attached%20files/International/AAUW%20International%20Reading%20List%202009.pdf>

○ Become familiar with the **United Nations Millennium Goals** (MDG) and the newly agreed upon focus on women in the United Nations structure. (www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

“The MDGs are too big to fail. We are ready to act, ready to deliver, and ready to make 2010 a year of results for people.”

Ban Ki-moon

The Millennium Goals encompass eight key areas with benchmarks for every five years. The areas of

focus are gender equality, child health, maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability and global partnership for development. With only five years left until the 2015 deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on world leaders to attend a summit next September to boost progress towards the MDGs.

O Sign up for the **AAUW Public Policy Action Network** and let your voice be heard.

http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/index.cfm

Support a Cause That Resonates with You...

- Build schools for others in foreign countries. Contact Wendy Maragh Taylor from the Poughkeepsie Branch to learn more about the **Liberia Project**.
- AAUW Rockland Branch **Mentor Program** for foreign students from Latin America. Contact Melissa Guardaro from the Rockland Branch.
- **Knitting for Peace:** *Make the World a Better Place One Stitch at a Time* is a book by Betty Christiansen with 28 examples of knitting projects.
- Janet Forbes of the Jamestown Branch has instituted a **knitting project** based upon

information from the website

<http://www.women4women-knitting4peace.com/> .

- The Bath branch presented the DVD “**Hope is Life**” about NYS Summer Leadership Conference 2009 presenter Natasha Yogachandra’s efforts to stop trafficking of young girls in Asia.
- Sue Osterhoudt from the Poughkeepsie branch is **building a library** and developing a college scholarship in Madagascar.
- **UNICEF** (www.unicef.org) - The United Nations Children's Fund helps children living in poverty in developing countries.
- **UNIFEM Unite Program** (<http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/sayno/>) this program aims to trigger and highlight actions by individuals, governments and civil society partners. The goal is to compile 100,000 actions by March 2010 and one million actions within the year.
- **UNIFEM Virtual Knowledge Center to End Violence Against Women and Girls-** This organization provides a font of knowledge about violence against women, strategies to end this problem and information about monitoring and evaluation. Visit <http://www.endvawnow.org/?start-here-programming-essentials-me>

Easy Empowerment: Every Sister Can Do!

- **Goodsearch** (www.goodsearch.com) - Use **GoodSearch.com** like any other search engine, but each time you do, money is generated for your favorite cause. If your branch is a 501c3, you can collect money for your **Sister's Keeper** projects.
- Read a Book from the **International Reading List**
http://www.aauw.org/education/community_programs/adelante/
- See a movie for inspiration to action. Select several movies and develop a film discussion series.
 - **Taking Root** about Wangari Maathai, the Noble Peace Prize winner who planted trees and seeds of hope for women worldwide was shown by the Rockland Branch.
 - **Pray the Devil Back to Hell**, the courageous story of Liberian women whose grassroots activism changed the course of history.
<http://www.rocoeducational.com/index.php?src=PTD>
- Share this video about maternal health with your friends and one dollar will be donated for each video viewing to Pathfinder International, an organization devoted to female reproductive health.
http://www.pathfind.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Girl2Woman_index
- **Examine your actions: empower women and girls in your everyday life! All girls are valuable!**

And, in closing, you must see this video:

The Girl Effect – Invest in a girl and she will do the rest.

<http://www.girleffect.org/video>

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