

December 15, 2011

Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash! This is part one of a two part Newsflash dedicated to Women's Health. Part one describes many of the barriers and issues women face in relation to their health care and wellbeing. Part two, to be continued next week, outlines solutions and what we can do to change this reality.

Until next week!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

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(Call for Applications) The Road Safety Fund seeks Grant Applications for Improving Road Safety Condition in Middle-Income and Low-Income Countries  
(Offer) Computer Aid International Offers on Computers and Laptops  
(Offer) Refurbished Computers  
(Resource) Women's Health is in Your Hands

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(Call for Applications) The Road Safety Fund seeks Grant Applications for Improving Road Safety Condition in Middle-Income and Low-Income Countries

The Road Safety Fund is the organization dedicated to support and encourage preventative measures that are proven to reduce the risk or severity of road injury. The Fund was established as a global fund to support the implementation of the United Nations' Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. The Fund gets donations from different companies, governments, philanthropies and the public and supports road injury prevention programmes in countries and communities working to defeat this growing epidemic of road death and injury. The Road Safety Fund believes in investing in the people and the skills that can provide sustainable paths to safety.

The Road Safety Fund is currently inviting applications under small grant program for projects with potential to improve road safety condition in middle-income and low-income countries. The Small Grants Programme is enabled with the generous support of Allianz, Bosch, Guinea Alumina, Innovate Solutions and Vinci Autoroutes Foundation. The fund is looking for projects that will make a demonstrable and sustainable contribution towards the achievement of the Goal of the Decade of Action: to save five million lives by 2020. The small grant funding is intended to enable and catalyse practical activity.

Up to a maximum of US\$30,000 per project

To be considered for funding, applicants must:

1. Be governmental or non-profit organisations with a track record in road injury prevention activities or related fields;
2. Ensure project proposals:
  - are aligned with the Global Plan for the Decade of Action;
  - contribute to road injury reduction in middle-income and/or low income countries;
  - demonstrate a catalysing effect, for example by:
    - encouraging and enabling institutional capacity development including, where applicable, legislation and enforcement of road injury risk factors;
    - building sustainable national or local partnerships and campaigns to practically address specific road injury risk factors, e.g. seat belt, helmet or drink driving coalitions;
    - developing strategies to sustain activities over the medium and long term, for example by using the project to leverage additional public/private sector funding;
    - demonstrating potential transferability of your activity to other regions/countries;
    - include measurable outputs and objectives;
3. Accept, understand and meet their obligations under the UK Bribery Act 2010

Deadline for Submission: January 31, 2012

For more go

to: <http://www.roadsafetyfund.org/activities/Pages/SmallGrantsProgramme.aspx>

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Computer Aid International Offers on Computers and Laptops

Computer Aid international's vision is a world where rich and poor have equal access to ICT. Computer Aid wishes to maximize the volume of high quality computers or laptops reaching educational and not-for-profit organisations at the lowest costs possible. They can provide your organisation with any number of PCs from 1 to over 10,000. If you require a large volume of computers or have a specific request then please discuss your particular needs with us.

All our computers and laptops are donated in the UK from many sources and so we cannot guarantee any brand or particular type of computer. Wherever possible we keep machines of a particular brand and model together and ship them together but we can never tell you what specific makes, models or brands will be in a particular consignment. We do not provide unbranded clones. You will

receive a mixture of the most popular brands used by UK companies.

For more go to: <http://www.computeraid.org/enquire.asp>

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## Refurbished Computers

TechSoup's Refurbished Computer Initiative (RCI) is a pioneering program bringing high-quality refurbished computers and other hardware to nonprofits and libraries. We are focused on creating environmentally friendly alternatives to disposing of used equipment by developing partnerships with computer refurbishers who bring industry expertise and a commitment to serving the social benefit sector and also with corporations who want to meet their philanthropic goals through effective redistribution of their used equipment.

Eligible organizations can choose from a range of high-quality refurbished computer systems and other refurbished technology. While supply for the program is subject to availability, each piece of hardware offered through RCI comes from top manufacturers — including Dell, HP, and IBM — and is designed to meet the rigorous standards of corporate users, not home users. All equipment is guaranteed to be in excellent working condition by our refurbisher partners and has undergone thorough testing, repair, restoration, and cleaning.

As with many refurbished computer products, RCI equipment is classified as either Condition A, meaning that it meets the highest functional and cosmetic standards of refurbished equipment, or Condition B, meaning that it might have cosmetic defects that do not affect its operability. All refurbished equipment available through TechSoup is Condition A unless Condition B is specified in the product name. Refurbished computers arrive ready to use, with a Windows operating system already installed and, for many, a Microsoft office software suite as well. All peripherals such as power cords, mice, and keyboards are included. The administrative fee includes all taxes, shipping, and handling.

When RCI computers finally reach the end of their useful life or become obsolete, they are eligible for free recovery and recycling services.

For more information, click a category name below to see current offerings and then click a product's See More button to see complete details. To learn more about RCI and find out if your organization meets the program requirements, check the following pages:

[http://home.techsoup.org/stock/pages/category.aspx?category=RCI&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=appitup&utm\\_content=nov3&utm\\_campaign=btc](http://home.techsoup.org/stock/pages/category.aspx?category=RCI&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=appitup&utm_content=nov3&utm_campaign=btc)

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## **(Resource) Women's Health is in Your Hands**

Around the world, millions of women live in rural or urban areas 'where there is no doctor' or where health care is not affordable. Many women suffer and die needlessly because they lack access to health care and clear, useful information about their health. To make it useful, we asked women around the world about their health needs, beliefs, and practices—and what they would most like included in the book. These same women also helped us write the book. Their voices, experiences, and stories helped shape the writing.

### **Women's Health Is a Community Issue**

#### ***What Is 'Women's Health'?***

When a woman is healthy, she has the energy and strength to do her daily work, to fulfill the many roles she has in her family and community, and to build satisfying relationships with others. In other words, a woman's health affects every area of her life. Yet for many years, 'women's health care' has meant little more than maternal health services such as care during pregnancy and birth. These services are necessary, but they address women's needs only as mothers.

In this book we offer a different view of women's health. First, we believe that **every woman has a right to complete health care, throughout her life**. A woman's health care should help her in all areas of life—not just in her role as a wife and mother. Second, we believe that **a woman's health is affected not just by the way her body is made, but by the social, cultural, and economic conditions in which she lives**.

Good health is more than the absence of disease. Good health means the well-being of a woman's body, mind, and spirit.

While men's health is also affected by these factors, women as a group are treated differently from men. They usually have less power and fewer resources, and lower status in the family and community. This basic inequality means that:

- more women than men suffer from poverty.
- more women than men are denied the education and skills to support themselves.
- more women than men lack access to important health information and services.
- more women than men lack control over their basic health care decisions.

This larger view helps us understand the underlying (root) causes of women's poor health. Improving women's health includes treating their health problems, but it also requires changing the conditions of their lives so they can gain more power over their own health.

When this happens, everyone—the woman, her family and community—benefits. A healthy woman has a chance to fulfill all of her potential. Plus, she will have healthier babies, be better able to care for her family, and can contribute more to her community. This kind of view also helps us see that a woman's health problem is almost never her problem alone. **Women's health is a community issue.**

## **WOMEN ARE MORE AT RISK FOR DISEASE AND POOR HEALTH**

### ***Poor nutrition***

Poor nutrition is the most common and disabling health problem among women in poor countries. Starting in childhood, a girl is often given less food to eat than a boy. As a result, she may grow more slowly and her bones may not develop properly (which may later cause difficulty during childbirth). The problem worsens as she becomes a young woman, because her need for good food increases as her workload increases, and as she starts her monthly bleeding, becomes pregnant, and breastfeeds.

### ***Reproductive health problems***

**A woman is physically more vulnerable than a man to infections like STIs and HIV.** And, since a woman often has no signs of infection, she may not get treatment. Because women must often have unsafe sex against their will, STIs are a social issue.

But the problem is really a social one. Women often have little control over decisions about sex and often cannot refuse unsafe sex. As a result, millions of women get an STI every year, and more than 17 million are already infected with HIV. Without treatment, STIs can cause disabling pain, severe pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility, problems during pregnancy, and an increased risk of cervical cancer. Untreated, HIV becomes AIDS, which causes death.

In many parts of the world, a third to half of young women become mothers before they are 20 years old. Without family planning, many of these women will not have time to get strong again between births. This puts a woman at risk for poor health and complications of pregnancy and childbirth. **Frequent childbirth also means she is less able to control her own life, to get an education, and to learn skills to support herself.**

### **Every minute, one woman dies from a problem related to pregnancy.**

In the last 40 years, the number of infant deaths has been greatly reduced. Yet the number of women who die from pregnancy and birth has not. Every minute, one woman dies from a problem related to pregnancy or childbirth. And for every woman who dies in childbirth, 20 more suffer from injury or infection. This means that over time, about a quarter of all women living in poor countries will be seriously affected by complications from pregnancy and birth.

### **Every year 70,000 women die from unsafe abortions.**

When a woman tries to end a pregnancy by having an unsafe abortion, she risks her life. But every day about 60,000 women and girls try to end their pregnancies in unsafe ways because they have no way to get a safe abortion. Many are left unable to have children or with lasting pain, infection, and other health problems.

### **Every year about 3 million girls are cut, mostly in Africa, and in some parts of the Middle East and Asia.**

Female genital cutting, in which part or all of a girl's outer genitals are cut off, can cause serious health problems. These include pelvic and urine system infections, sexual and emotional problems, and difficulties during childbirth. Yet despite these problems, it continues to be widely practiced.

### ***General medical problems***

Men and women get many of the same diseases, but women can be affected differently. Women are more likely than men to suffer from certain health problems because of the work they do, because of poor nutrition, or from being too tired. A disease can also cause a different kind of harm to a woman than a man. For example, a woman who suffers from a disease which weakens her or makes her look ugly may be rejected by her husband.

Once they are sick, women are less likely to seek and receive treatment until they are seriously ill. For example, tuberculosis (TB) is spreading among both men and women, but fewer women than men get treatment. Almost 3000 women die every day from TB—at least 1/3 of whom did not receive proper treatment or never even knew they had the disease. Other health problems that in the past affected mostly men are now risks for women, too. For example, more women are suffering from problems related to smoking cigarettes or drinking too much alcohol.

### ***Work hazards***

A woman faces health risks from her work inside and outside of the home.

Working long hours, the 'double work day', can make her body too tired to fight disease.

### ***Mental health problems***

Women and men have about the same risk of developing a mental health problem. Severe depression, however, affects many more women than men. It often affects women who are poor, who have experienced loss or violence, or whose communities have been destroyed or undergone great change. But women who suffer any kind of mental health problem are much less likely than men to get help.

### ***Violence***

Violence is often overlooked as a health problem. But violence can lead to serious injuries, mental health problems, physical disabilities, and even death. Rape and sexual harassment are a constant threat to all women. Many girls are sexually abused by family members or friends. Many women are forced to have sex or are physically abused by their partners. Increasingly violent and damaging rapes and sexual assaults have become common practices during wartime.

Even though these kinds of violence against women and girls happen in almost all parts of the world, most of it is not reported, because the police and others often blame women rather than men for the problem. The men causing the violence are rarely punished.

## **CAUSES OF POOR HEALTH IN WOMEN**

It is easy to name the direct causes of most of women's health problems. For example, we can say that STIs are caused by different germs, poor nutrition comes from not eating enough good food, and problems during pregnancy are often caused by a lack of prenatal (before birth) care. But beneath these direct causes are 2 root causes—poverty and the low status of women—that contribute to many of women's health problems.

### ***Poverty***

Two out of three women around the world are poor. Women are not only much more likely than men to be poor, but are most often among the poorest of the poor. Millions of women are caught in a cycle of poverty that begins even before they are born. Babies born to women who did not get enough to eat during pregnancy are likely to be small at birth and to develop slowly. In poor families, girls are less likely than their brothers to get enough to eat, causing their growth to be further stunted. Girls are often given little or no education, so as women they must work at unskilled jobs and receive less wages than men (even if they do the same kind of work). At home, their daily work is unpaid. Exhaustion, poor

nutrition, and lack of good care during pregnancy place the woman and her children at risk for poor health.

Poverty forces her to live under conditions that can cause many physical and mental health problems. For example, poor women often:

- live in bad housing, with little or no sanitation or clean water.
- do not have enough good food, and must spend precious time and energy looking for food they can afford.
- are forced to accept dangerous work, or to work very long hours.
- cannot use medical care, even if it is free, because they cannot afford time off work or away from their families.
- are so busy struggling to survive that they have little time or energy to take care of their own needs, to plan for a better future, or to learn new skills.
- are blamed for their poverty and made to feel less important than those with more money.

Poverty often forces women into relationships in which they must depend on men for survival. If a woman depends on a man for her—or her children's— support, she may have to do things to keep him happy that are dangerous to her health. For example, she may allow him to be violent or to have unsafe sex because she fears losing his economic support.

### ***Low status of women***

Wanting sons rather than daughters. Many families value boys more than girls because boys can contribute more to the family's wealth, support their parents in old age, perform ceremonies after their parents die, and carry on the family name. As a result, girls are often breastfed for a shorter time, are given less food and medical care, and receive little or no education. Status is the importance that a person has in the family and community. Status affects how a woman is treated, how she values herself, the kinds of activities she is allowed to do, and the kinds of decisions she is allowed to make. In most communities in the world, women have lower status than men. Women's lower status leads to discrimination—that is, being treated poorly or denied something simply because they are women. Discrimination may take different forms in different communities, but it always affects a woman's health.

Because so much of the work that women do is not recognized, they often lack legal protection in the workplace.

### ***Lack of legal rights or power to make decisions.***

In many communities, a woman cannot own or inherit property, earn money, or get credit. If she gets divorced, she may not be allowed to keep her children or

her belongings. Even if a woman has legal rights, her community's traditions may allow her little control over her life. Often a woman cannot decide how the family's money is spent or when to get health care. She cannot travel or participate in community decisions without her husband's permission.

When women are denied power in these ways, they must depend on men to survive. As a result, they cannot easily demand things that contribute to good health, like family planning, safer sex, enough food, health care, and freedom from violence.

**Women make up half of the world's population, but work 2 out of every 3 hours worked in the world, receive only a tenth of the world's income, and own only a hundredth of the world's property.**

Having too many children, or having children too close together. Discrimination against women can also lead them to get pregnant more often, because bearing children may be the only way that women can gain status for themselves or their partners. Under all these conditions, women live less healthy lives and get less health care. They also often accept their low status, because they have been raised to value themselves less than men. They may accept poor health as their lot in life and seek help only when health problems are severe or life-threatening.

***The medical system does not meet women's needs***

Poverty and discrimination in the family and community not only lead to more health problems for women, they also make the medical system less likely to provide the services women need. Government policies and the global economy may add to this problem.

In poor countries, many people do not have access to health services of any kind. (The box below explains one reason why this problem has become worse in recent years.) And because of discrimination against women, the little money that does exist will probably not be spent on women's health needs. So a woman may not be able to get good care even if she can afford to pay for it. Some reproductive health services may be provided, but to meet all of her health needs, she would have to travel to the capital city or perhaps even leave her country.

In many countries, the skills needed to care for women are considered 'special' and are provided only by doctors. Yet many of these services could be provided at lower cost by trained community health workers.

***Debt and poor countries***

Since the 1970s, when many poor countries were pressured to borrow money from banks in rich countries, huge debts have meant that governments are still

struggling to meet the basic needs of their people. Although there has been a lot of corruption, many countries have started new schools, hospitals, clinics, and other projects.

***Many public health centers lack even the most basic medicines, supplies and equipment.***

But as the banks demand that their money be paid back, the poor countries have been forced to change or “adjust” their economies in ways that make life harder for poor people. These countries are forced to use much of the wealth the people produce to pay the banks, and to change their laws to make it easier for foreign companies to make money by using the poor countries’ resources and labor. Basic services like water, electricity, communications and pensions have been sold to profit-seeking, foreign companies.

As a result, people work harder than ever but still have trouble meeting their basic needs. Governments now have less money for schools, health centers, hospitals, and programs that help people get food and fuel at a fair price. The health of all poor people suffers from these changes, but the health of poor women and children suffers most of all.

For more go

to: [http://en.hesperian.org/hhg/Where Women Have No Doctor:Introductory Material#Women.27s health is in your hands](http://en.hesperian.org/hhg/Where_Women_Have_No_Doctor:Introductory_Material#Women.27s_health_is_in_your_hands)

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As part of the Firelight Foundation’s Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides “Newsflashes” to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.php>.

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org).