



Norfolk Federation of WIs

Charity Number: 227411

EDP: Lighting the Flame: International Women's Day (IWD)

Sunday 11 March 2018

Mary Dorrell

How often do we say "my back is killing me"? I thought about this recently, in Tanzania, when I witnessed so many back breaking jobs as women went about their daily tasks.

Back home and hoping for signs of spring, it is time to think about planting out my cabbages. Maybe not yet, but on the shores of Lake Victoria vegetables are planted on a two-month rotation, so there is always a crop to harvest as well as one to plant. The soil is rich, but water is difficult to bring to the fields. As a man moved the hose-pipe from plot to plot, the women carrying buckets on their heads, wanted to stop and chat, "*You are welcome in our village*". Women at work, building a sense of community. The cabbages being planted, I noticed, look much like ours; but the hazards are different. We were warned to expect a noisy night if elephants from the nearby Serengeti had to be chased off and I saw footprints across the fields from Africa's deadliest animal: the hippopotamus. But none of the locals expected the 15 foot python we chanced upon whilst walking through the reed beds and which horrified them; as well as providing an obvious explanation of the goat that had gone missing.

The welcome had been the same when we stood in line to join the Masai women singing, days earlier. They taught me how to flip or toss the traditional women's Masai collar (the action, it turns out, is in the shoulders, not the bosom). A useful skill now I am back in Norfolk? The Norfolk Women Reaching Women community has been preparing for Norfolk's 2018 International Woman's Day. No necklace tossing ... but a great deal of friendship! In many countries IWD, March 8th, is the day when mothers are given flowers and in some countries it is a public holiday. This year, thanks to Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, we are combining the event with our traditional flower-giving day: Mothering Sunday.

Consisting of over a dozen organisations; NWRW is convened by Norfolk Federation WIs and we have celebrated International Women's Day and Norfolk's equality and diversity together for some years. Amongst over twenty organisations, we include: the WI, Mother's Union, Soroptimists, Norwich Dedza Partnership and the Daisy Project. This year's event is called "Lighting the Flame" with an educational theme that is both a UN sustainable development goal and part of the WI aim to offer a wide range of learning opportunities. "*Girls who see the flame lit by their mothers will one day light the fire for their own children.*" says Patience Unazi of Diversity Plus, who will have hand crafted items on sale as well as entertaining us with African story telling.

Our Keynote Speaker is Janet Clark of Gambian Aid Through Education, another local charity, that helps some of the poorest people in Africa by selling their handicrafts. "*By helping the women in The Gambia we can get more children into education which is the path from poverty.*" Other locally based charities include The Freedom Charity working to prevent FGM in UK and organisations working with Norfolk women who have low self esteem: "*This is a fantastic opportunity to network with other women's organisations.*" Mandy Proctor CEO, Leeway.

Part of the annual Mothering Sunday event, Miriam Burroughs, of Gressenhall, tells us: "*The spring flowers are coming into bloom so spend some precious time together exploring our 50 acre site. There will be activities for the whole family including stalls, crafts, talks, singing and story-telling. There will also be a chance to look behind the scenes at the Norfolk Collections Centre. Don't forget in the Mardlers' Rest Café, a treat awaits with a free cream tea for all mothers!*"

Much of what mothers and women do, around the world is back-breaking. Come and join with this diverse group of women on March 11th and spoil your mum with a cream tea!



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Participants in Norfolk IWD 2018

NORFOLK WOMEN REACHING WOMEN (NWRW)
Norfolk Federation of Women's Institutes (Conveners)
Associated Country Women of the World
Daisy Programme
Diversity Plus
Equal Lives
Freedom Charity
Gambian Aid Through Education
Girlguiding Norfolk
Leeway
Mothers' Union
NCC Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator
Norwich Dedza
Nurtured Naturally
Samia Malik
School Readers
Sorooptimists
UEA RESNET
Women Against State Pension Inequality
Women's Equality Party
Women's International League of Peace and Freedom
Woodcraft Folk

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AROUND THE WORLD

IWD is an official holiday in many countries including Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China (for women only), Cuba, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Madagascar (for women only), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal (for women only), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Zambia. The tradition sees men honouring their mothers, wives, girlfriends, colleagues, etc with flowers and small gifts. In some countries IWD has the equivalent status of Mother's Day where children give small presents to their mothers and grandmothers.

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

<https://www.facebook.com/events/381688495650318/>

<https://www.thewi.org.uk/become-a-member/structure-of-the-wi/england/norfolk/norfolk-women-reaching-women>

THE 2018 THEME IN NORFOLK IS "GIRLS & EDUCATION"

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. This complements The WI desire to offer a wide range of learning opportunities in a variety of settings and promote lifelong learning. Worldwide, it has been shown that girls with higher levels of education are less likely to have an early and unintended pregnancy (UNESCO). In addition to the direct benefit for girls and their families, addressing this problem also contributes to achievement of several [SDGs](#) including that of achieving gender equality (SDG5).