

to her work at a Tokyo children's playroom when her older daughter was seven months old. Now, she suffers cold remarks from her colleagues when she leaves to pick up her two children. "I wish someday working moms could go home early without saying 'I'm sorry'," sighs Asami.

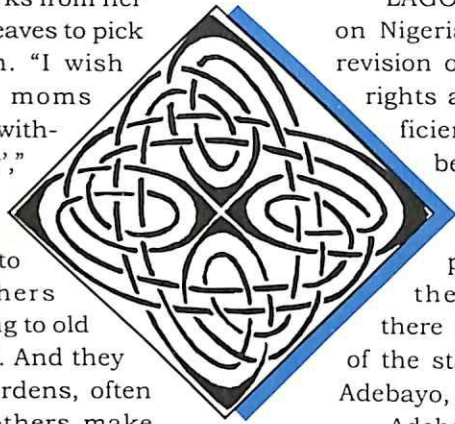
Nurseries set up by the government to help working mothers cope are run according to old ideals of motherhood. And they impose their own burdens, often demanding that mothers make highly specified bags for lunches and futon mattresses for the child's nap. Asami got her mother to help her with her second child's nursery bags; some mothers pay a department store to do it. Mothers must also keep a daily diary for the nursery, detailing the child's temperature, what he ate, and a comment about what he does every day.

The nursery system was set up in the 1960s, when the only working mothers were from poor families; the government encouraged husbands to work hard and wives who could to stay home.

Today's nurseries don't cater to the demands of the burgeoning number of working women who use them. They don't stay open long hours, for example, and many won't accept young babies. As a result, some mothers are forced to use two or three different daycare centers to keep their full-time jobs. And nursery fees, which run to more than U.S.\$500 a month in Tokyo's suburbs, aren't tax-exempt.

"To the working moms who are working so hard and paying tax," says Asami, "the system is so unkind."

Source: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 April 1997



LEGAL SILENCE ON WIFE BATTERING

by Remi Oyo

LAGOS, April 29 - The heat is on Nigeria's government for the revision of laws which women's-rights activists consider insufficiently stern against wife beating.

"Wife battering should not be permissible by the law. If the wave is increasing, there is need for amendment of the statute books," said Jide Adebayo, a civil servant.

Adebayo's position is shared by various non-governmental organizations and related associations that have begun canvassing for laws to curb wife beating to ensure full protection for women.

The Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) has recommended the adoption of a new law criminalizing domestic violence and urged that more NGOs provide data on violence against women, particularly domestic violence, to facilitate lobbying for the enactment of these laws and for litigation.

Violence against women here stems mainly from the widely-held perception of male superiority and the belief that men have the right to beat their wives.

"Wife beating is tolerated both socially and culturally. It is believed, though erroneously, that an erring wife should be brought back to the right path of life by beating her once in a while," said Ngozi Osarenren, a lecturer at the University of Lagos who has done research on women's issues.

According to the CRP, domestic violence is a "reflection of the power relationship between husband and wife. The husband derives power from being the supposed provider and head of the family. The power includes

coercive power which is often manifest in physical and mental subjugation through violence."

"Even if he is not able to fulfill his commitments, he still draws power from a society which holds men to be superior to women," according to the CRP's report, 'Unequal Rights' which details discriminatory laws and practices against women in Nigeria.

"Wife battering is regarded as a family problem to be settled in the privacy of the home" and is classified under common assault in the nation's criminal code, said the CRP report. "Not until grievous bodily harm is inflicted and, possibly the death of a victim, are the law enforcement agents willing to assist."

In northern Nigerian states, Section 55 of the Penal Code states: "Nothing is an offense which does not amount to the infliction of grievous hurt upon any person and which is done...by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife such husband and wife being subject to any custom in which such correction is recognized as lawful."

According to the penal code, grievous bodily harm includes emasculation, permanent loss of sight, ability to hear or speak, facial disfigurement, or joint, bone fracture or tooth dislocation and other life-endangering harm.

Few victims of abuse will seek legal redress as divorce is frowned upon. Cases of spousal abuse are most often reported by neighbors, and the wives who are bold enough to do so are usually referred to the Welfare Department of the Ministry in charge.

Statistics provided by CRP indicated that between 1982 and 1988, 1,220 cases of wife battering were referred to the Family Welfare Department in the midwest city of Benin, which has a population of less than one

million.

While much of society would prefer to keep wife beating in the closet, Osarenren said the effects of physical and sexual abuse on the woman and the family are great. "The woman who suffers this kind of violence will experience permanent emotional disturbance occasioned by the presence of the man.

"The woman will have poor self-concept and low self-esteem. Children lose respect for their fathers and at times challenge their fathers. The children may become insecure and the act of violence against their mothers becomes also a stigma," said Osarenren.

Some bodies, such as Women in Nigeria (WIN), are taking a firm stand in defense of battered women. Toro Oladapo, WIN's deputy coordinator told IPS the organization had taken up the case of a woman who lost four teeth from a beating by her husband. Oladapo said the case of assault brought against the man was being handled in court in conjunction with the international federation of female lawyers.

"WIN fights any move that stands in the way of progress," said Oladapo. "We oppose any harmful practice against women and we will continue to fight for our rights as a group. In fact we are trying to set up legal departments in all our branches to handle such cases."

Dupe Ajayi, editor of the *Weekend Times*, confirmed that more women's organizations are working hard to eradicate harmful practices such as wife battering and genital mutilation.

Ajayi said in an interview with IPS: "The time has come for the reform of laws concerning the rights of women."

"Most of the women who

suffer battering are providers for their families, they fend for the children and even the husband. In most cases, these wife batterers are 'never do wells' who come home to vent their frustrations on their wives," she argued.

Source: *Inter Press Service* 29 April 1997

VIDEO SHOWS TORTURE IN EAST TIMOR

GENEVA—A blood-covered youth nailed to a wooden table was among the many gruesome images in a video presented by Nobel Peace laureate Jose Ramos-Horta to show Indonesian soldiers torturing East Timor civilians.

The self-exiled East Timor independence leader showed reporters the video of still images during a hearing of the UN Human Rights Commission and called for a full investigation into torture there.

Invaded by Indonesia in 1975 during a civil war following the end of 400 years of Portuguese colonial rule, East Timor was annexed a year later. Subsequently, Indonesia has faced a pro-independence campaign marked by low-level guerrilla warfare.

Human rights groups say Indonesian troops have tortured, beaten and killed thousands of East Timorese to stifle separatist yearnings.

Besides pictures of the crucified youth were images of a man in fatigues ramming a large metal pole down a prisoner's throat, a blindfolded victim being burned with cigarettes and choked with chains, and corpses covered by dirty banners bearing mocking messages or simply dumped in shallow graves.

The East Timorese separatist spokesperson said the pictures

had been taken in East Timor prisons in Dili in November 1996 and recently smuggled out.

"They are consistent with the Indonesian practice of documenting their own torture, executions, or soldiers taking pictures as souvenirs, like trophies," said Ramos-Horta, who shared the 1996 Nobel Peace prize with Roman Catholic Bishop Carlos Belo, the religious leader of East Timor.

Source: *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 10 April 1997

CHILD LABOR RISING IN THE SOUTH

From the brothels of Asia to the carpet factories of Pakistan, 250 million children aged five to 14, or almost twice as many as the 73 million previously thought, are employed in countries in the South. Half of them are employed full-time, according to a report by the International Labor Organization, a United Nations agency.

The ILO report, based on in-depth surveys and interviews, estimates 153 million children are working in Asia, 80 million in Africa, and 17.5 million in Latin America. The ILO also calls for a new international accord that shall ban the harshest forms of child labor: prostitution, slavery and work in hazardous industries. (The new accord would replace the 1976 child-labor convention, which has only been ratified by 49 UN member countries.)

Michael Hansenne, director-general of ILO, states that child labor only perpetuates an endless cycle of illiteracy and poverty. He added that "slavery" is still practised in parts of South Asia, Southeast Asia and West Africa, where children are "sold" by their impoverished families and forced to work in factories and as prostitutes.

The ILO notes that child

