

been in offering the kind of writing that helps generate serious thought.

"Since we began," explains Lamas, "we've tried to represent two main movement currents: a 'cultural feminism,' giving priority to the transformation of daily life, and a 'political feminism,' connected to realpolitik. Since in Mexico geopolitical considerations are significant, much of the translated texts and research comes from the United States and Great Britain. ... The work of Chicanas has been interesting and useful." *Debate Feminista* has changed surprisingly little over the years, she adds, "because our issues remain the same: reproductive rights, racism, homophobia... Only through public debate can we change stereotypes and introduce a new paradigm allowing us to rethink life and widen the margins of power. It's necessary to debate *within* the movement as a step to sparking *public* debate. We believe strongly that 'the personal is political' is *still* true."

— MARYSA NAVARRO

Soap Operas are Changing Lives—For the Better!

Highlights Women's Status

THE SCENE IS AN OPEN-AIR market in Ethiopia. Suddenly, a woman hears a familiar voice beside her. She is certain it is the voice of an actress from her favorite radio soap opera.

"I recognize your voice from the soap opera Yeken Kignit [*Looking Over One's Daily Life*] on Radio Ethiopia. We have named our daughter Fikirte after you," the woman says with a radiant smile. "We are hoping she will grow up to be as wonderful as you are," she tells Haregewoine Assefa, who plays the positive role model Fikirte.

Now if you can imagine entertainment media changing women's lives for the better—not an easy leap—you get a sense of the goals and accomplishments of a nonprofit group called Population Media Center. Founded in 1998 by a feminist man named Bill Ryerson, PMC is dedicated to promoting family planning, safe sexual practices and the elevation of women's status worldwide through a unique strategy. Working in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it produces radio and television dramas that bring positive messages and education to an impoverished population that is starved for both.

In Sudan, the radio drama is called *Ashreat Al Amal* (*Sails of Hope*, in Arabic) and deals with reproductive-health issues. In Mali, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast, a program called *Cesiri Tono* (*All the Rewards of Courage and Hard Work*) addresses child trafficking.

PMC's strategy is working. Of people coming to Ethiopian clinics for the first time for reproductive-health care, some 55 percent say they are listening to one of PMC's programs.

"I believe we are changing women's lives using the most effective tool in the world—the media," says Virginia Carter, a PMC board member who uses her 15 years as a Hollywood executive to help put together the shows. "PMC helps create wildly entertaining soap operas with a purpose... to pattern a society where women are educated, have access to medical care and share decision-making and power. My efforts in Hollywood pale by comparison."

— ELAINE LAFFERTY

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