



University of Dar es Salaam

Our December 2020 UDSM Alumna

This is a “light corner” on the UDSM portal intended to feature for one month in turns two among many of the University’s graduates—alumni—since its foundation in 1961. The corner is designed to inform the public and the University itself, without prejudice in terms of historical precedence but guided only by professional information search, on the past graduates of the University, their whereabouts, their current position or engagement, what is remembered of them as past ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ of their time and, finally, on what is reckoned about their contribution to their Alma Mater, their nation, the Africa region and/or the wider world.

Margaret C. SNYDER (American)



Year of Matriculation: 1965/66

Year of Graduation: 1971;

Degree: PhD (Sociology & Social Anthropology, University of East Africa, University College Dar es Salaam

More info:

- **B.A. (1950, Social Sciences), College of New Rochelle, New York;**
- **MA. (1952, Sociology), Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, USA**

Margaret Snyder is one of the early doctoral candidates of the University of Dar es Salaam, then a constituent college of the now defunct University of East Africa, in 1965/66. Margaret had come to Dar es Salaam by way of international women service-and-research sponsorship from her college of postgraduate employment, LeMoyne Women’s College.

Born in 1929 in Syracuse, New York, Margaret went to junior and high school in the same state, joining thereafter a private Catholic college for women at New Rochelle, from which she earned a B.A in social science in 1950. She subsequently enrolled for a two-year master’s degree programme in sociology at the Catholic University of America, which she earned in 1952. In 1953, she obtained a teaching job at LeMoyne Women’s College and was in the next few years appointed Dean of Women. She served there for continuous period of eight years. In 1961, she took a one year sabbatical leave to travel to Africa, where she worked with the President John F. Kennedy’s government’s Women’s Africa Committee, aimed at improving the educational lot of women on the African continent. Snyder’s initial contribution was to assess the educational needs, promote an international student programme, and stimulate African female students’ interest in international affairs. Kenya and the Kenya African Women’s Association were her original contact points, serving as an advisor to prominent women such as Ms Margaret Kenyatta, daughter of the would-be first President of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and helping, in the early-1960s “to raise the standard of women and girls through educational, social and cultural common interests.” Both these two ladies, in those years, played a behind-the-scenes role in facilitating the ‘Kennedy Airlifts to America’ for young Kenyan women vying to enrol in higher education institutions in the U.S.

In 1965 Margaret Snyder became assistant director for the Programme of Eastern African Studies at Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and she was assigned, as field director, to the School’s Ford Foundation-assisted doctoral dissertation research programme on village settlements in Tanzania. This gave her an added advantage for completion of her own dissertation research there in Tanzania. She registered for a PhD research programme in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology of the University College Dar es Salaam (UCD) while, at the same time, she played several other organisational roles with women groups not only in Tanzania but also in Kenya and Uganda. She presented herself for the oral doctoral viva voce in 1971 on the research theme of women development aspirations and participation in village settlements in Tanzania. She earned her PhD degree in that year. In the same year, 1971, Dr. Snyder accepted her initial position with the United Nations as a Consultant for the Economic Commission for Africa’s Regional Programme on Advancement of Women, which she held for eight years up to 1978. In this position, Snyder travelled on several missions throughout Africa in order to assess conditions of women in different educational and occupational situations. During this period she also co-founded an African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) – a centre that laid the foundation for women’s programmes in terms of research approaches and topics, training content and instructional methodology.

In 1978 Ms Snyder broadened her work as she was appointed the Founding Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), previously known as Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. This Office worked for women not only in Africa alone, but also in Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, creating new and proactive projects in order to promote the status and education of rural women throughout the developing world. UNIFEM also went into partnership with other regional and national organizations such as Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Women’s World Banking (WWB), and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA) so to maximise synergy and impact.

In the period 1992-1993, Dr. Snyder was offered a visiting fellowship at the Centre of International Studies, the Woodrow Wilson School and Princeton University; while, for the 1994-1995 academic year, she was granted a Fulbright Scholar Award to go and work with different women groups in Uganda.

Apart from the story recounted above, Margaret ‘Peg’ Snyder’s life—in active formal engagement and in formal retirement—will remain memorable for a number of other things: for instance as one of the women group who organized, edited and distributed the book *Liberian Women Peacemakers* (Africa World Press, 2004) under the aegis of the African Women and Peace Support Group. This same group of individuals later formed the [Ellen Johnson] Sirleaf Market Women’s Fund (SMWF), a non-profit fund that was dedicated to the economic development and empowerment of Liberian women. Snyder has served as Vice-President Emeritus for that Fund. She has also been a member on the Board of the Green-Belt Movement International which supports Kenya’s Green-Belt Movement by sponsoring information activities and mobilizing resources for environmental renewal work in Kenya. It is also worth noting that Margaret Snyder served as an International Election Observer in Ethiopia in 1992; in Tanzania in 1995; in Uganda in 1996; and in Zanzibar in 2000. UDSM highly appreciates the contributions she has made over the years.



Peg Snyder, founding director (1978) of UNIFEM, in her apartment in the Turtle Bay neighbourhood of Manhattan, decorated with art she collected from her many years spent in Eastern Africa (Credit Dulcie Leimbach)



Margaret ‘Peg’ Snyder, Founding Director UNIFEM (UN Development Fund for Women) in 1978 giving an annual lecture at the Women’s Caucus of the African Studies Association [December 18, 2015]. Her lecture was titled “Four Decisive Decades: The Birth and Growth of a Global Women’s Movement”. <http://unitwin.blogspot.com/2015>

Margaret C. SNYDER is our December November 2020 Alumna, and her great stories begin here!

Get in touch with us through

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