

and work responsibilities, but not so in this country, where ...

# SA women are willing to do it all

By MALISHA KALIDEEN AND SAPA-AFP

Chinese women are working over 12-hour days to get ahead, leaving little time for anything else. But it's worth the effort, say South African women.

It is all work and no play for China's growing army of female entrepreneurs as they try to build successful careers in a male-dominated society, Chinese state media reported yesterday.

Only 1,6% work less than eight hours a day, 83,5% work eight- to 12-hour days and 14,9% work more than 12 hours, the Xinhua news agency said, citing a survey from the China Association of Women Entrepreneurs.

The survey said more than 40% of China's private companies were run by women.

It said the predictable result of the long hours women worked was that they were left with little time to care for their children, do housework or even sleep.

But Dr Namane Magau, president of South Africa's Business Women's Association, said she found the situation in South Africa to be the contrary.

"Many women don't abdicate their responsibilities, but instead find creative ways of teaching their children to be independent and accountable," Magau said.

"I have read studies that highlight the fact that women who are entrepreneurial, career-orientated, disciplined and focused, pass that on to their own children, who learn to become independent," Magau said.

She said she had found the motivation for women to start their own businesses was because they required flexible hours to care for their families while earning an income.

"There are now more and more women moving into entrepreneurship and I think it is a positive thing."

Suzanne Ravenall is an entrepreneur who is now group chief executive officer of her company, IDCS Beyond Outsourcing, which she started in 1997.

Her company was recognised as

one of the Best Companies to Work For two years in a row, as one of the Top 300 Companies in South Africa two years in a row, and one of the Most Promising Companies in the country.

"Deeply satisfying relationships and rejuvenating self-care tend to suffer. If anything, it is usually the time for gym, reading and taking vacations that get affected," Ravenall said.

She said the key to balancing life and work was making a list of priorities and sticking to it.

"Women definitely have more things to do and, yes, in reality women have to work harder than men ... personally it's worth all the effort. As long as they understand what they want out of their life, then it really is worth it at the end of the day," she said.

Kobie van

Westhuizen, a fashion designer who started her company *fashion@art* two years ago, agrees that the effort and hours are well worth it. She designs clothes for the television soapie *Laan* and has many private clients.

"It is very difficult. I also work very long hours and have been doing so for the past 10 years. "You get used to the hours and the more you get used to it, the more you push yourself to perform harder. When I am not working, I miss it," Van der Westhuizen said.

Xinhua did not provide details about the survey, such as the number of entrepreneurs questioned about their work habits.

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The children of  
career-oriented  
women become  
more independent  
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... juggling ... Suzanne Ravenall believes the sacrifice is worth it.

## SUZANNE'S TIPS ON HOW TO ACHIEVE BALANCE

■ **OUTSOURCING:** I must be honest that this one is already firmly in place for me and I know of many businesspeople, particularly other women, who make extensive use of outsourcing. And, as the leader of an outsourcing business, you can understand why I would fully support it.

I have friends – a working couple – who are a family of three and have a household staff of five to keep their household running. There's a cook, a maid and an au pair, who does errands, shopping and dry-cleaning besides keeping up to speed with the baby's set of extramural activities. There's also a gardener and a driver.

■ **BUNDLING:** To a certain extent we all apply a bit of bundling to our current lives – bundlers get involved in less activities but they get more mileage out of those activities – this is like a book club activity or gymming three times a week with friends, one kills off the social aspect together with the activity at hand.

■ **TECHFLEXING:** If I had to draw a cartoon of techflexing it would

probably be of three people fly-fishing at Dullstroom. The one would answer his or her cellphone, "Good morning, Smith, Harris and Partners, how may I direct your call?"

"Techflexing is about leveraging technology to the point where we can conduct our work from almost anywhere, anytime. It doesn't imply that we should work all the time – it just implies that we should be able to work whenever and wherever we like." It's actually not about working more hours – it's about leveraging the hours we already have. Ravenall said there are three things women should remember when applying the tips:

- Understand the degree to which you're currently juggling and the reasons why you do.
- Take a look at possible alternatives and see how feasible it would be to apply these things to your life.
- It won't happen unless you put an action-plan in place and execute it.

■ Ravenall's ideas are from the book *Beyond Juggling: Rebalancing your busy life*.