

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

IAW website: <http://www.womenalliance.com>

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales



IAW NEWSLETTER - April 2005, nr. 4

Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

Health and in particular 'reproductive health' is the main theme of this April newsletter, caused by the concern of women about the worldwide spread of HIV/AIDs. IAW has a very active Health Commission, which is insisting everywhere on good access to information on sexual and reproductive health for women (and men!).

Lots of URLs of websites in this newsletter including, where possible, the names of the IAW women behind the seven IAW Commissions: 1. CEDAW and Political Rights; 2. Health; 3. Violence, Prostitution and Trafficking; 4. Environment; 5. Peace and Security; 6. Education; 7. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

STRONG MESSAGE FROM CSW

In closing remarks at CSW, Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, said: **“We cannot rest, we must continue to work hard to implement the Platform for Action and link it to the Millennium Declaration. We must ensure that there is never any slipping back.”** The road blocks ahead were still formidable. But she was confident that women, in partnerships with governments, civil society, international organizations and all men would overcome those obstacles.

WORLD HEALTH DAY - 7 APRIL

The World Health Day 2005 on 7 April, with the focus “Maternal and Child Health” and the slogan “Make every Mother and Child count”, reflects that all too often the health of women and children does not count. Half a million mothers in developing countries die in pregnancy and childbirth each year, and nearly 11 million children die before they reach their fifth birthday.

Millennium Development Goals

IAW fully supports the Millennium Development goals to reduce maternal deaths by three quarters and to reduce child mortality by two thirds of 1990 levels by the year 2015. To reach these bold targets we strongly promote the 'quick win' of expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and services within the poverty reduction strategy process, including family planning and contraceptive information and services, and closing existing funding gaps for supplies and logistics.

Core aspects

We also hold that women must profit from all core aspects: skilled attendants, access to emergency obstetric care for complications of pregnancy and abortion, and access to safe abortion services. Read more on www.who.int/world-health-day

IAW Commission Convenor for Health: Gudrun Haupter.

Resource members: Mala Pal, Switzerland; Sachiko Okumura, Japan; Clementine Ouedraogo, Burkino Faso; Helene Sackstein, France; Anindita Mukherji, West Bengal; Soon Young Yoon, USA.

Commission UNFPA - Maternal Mortality continues to be unacceptably high

Implementation of the Programme of Action agreed upon during the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt, had not advanced equally in all countries, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, José Antonio Ocampo, said at the opening of the thirty-eighth session of the Commission on Population and Development, with the special theme: HIV/AIDS, poverty and development.

Three million people die annually

The ICPD Programme of Action recognized that in developing countries, where population continued to increase, slower population growth would improve the ability of countries to combat poverty, protect the environment and set the necessary conditions for sustainable development. Full

implementation of the Programme of Action would contribute to slower population growth in developing countries by reducing fertility levels, which would lead to favourable age composition and increase women's participation in the workforce.

Forty million people living with HIV

Currently, over 40 million people were living with HIV, at least 25 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa, he said. The Millennium Development Goal of halting or reversing the spread of HIV was crucial for the development prospects of many countries. Full implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD had much to contribute to helping reduce the spread of the disease, particularly by ensuring that people got the information and means to protect themselves against contagion. Fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS demanded constant vigilance and sustained effort.

Advancing gender equality

Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), said one could not overstate the importance of advancing gender equality throughout the processes of development, humanitarian response and peace-building.

Information on reproductive health essential

Experts agreed that ensuring access to reproductive health information and services, including voluntary family planning, was absolutely essential to gender equality, reducing child and maternal mortality, combating HIV/AIDS and reducing poverty.

For international AIDS strategies to be more effective, it was necessary to ensure that HIV/AIDS and reproductive health and family planning were linked. Prevention of HIV required the availability of condoms as part of the comprehensive approach adopted by the UN special session on HIV/AIDS.

Interesting websites: <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=606>

and a webside with a worldwide map of UNFPA locations on <http://www.unfpa.org/worldwide/>

Violence against Women causes the spread of HIV/AIDS

Commission on Human Rights

Presenting a report indicating how violence against women increases their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, a United Nations expert told the UN Commission on Human Rights that the number of women living with the disease had increased in every region.

Yakin Ertürk, the Commission Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women said:

Multiple forms of violence, such as marital rape, and harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation, along with male infidelity and the refusal to use protective condoms, heightened the vulnerability of women, its causes and consequences.

Women as victims

Victims of trafficking, women in the sex industry and women living in or fleeing areas of conflict were often also the victims of violence, which increased the likelihood that they could become infected with the virus.

The overwhelming majority of HIV-positive women lacked access to effective medical treatment and, in some countries, could be forcibly sterilized, or have their babies taken away, she said.

Prevention and treatment

Programmes for the prevention of the pandemic and for treatment of the infected could not succeed unless unequal power structures in male-female relationships were confronted and gender-sensitive policies put in place, Ms Ertürk said. She recommended measures to end violence against women, address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS and remove the associated stigma, ensure equal access to health care, empower women for their full enjoyment of human rights and promote a global coalition against the disease.

Country visits

On her country visits last year, she said, an atmosphere of impunity surrounded murders of women, domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence in the workplace and commercial sexual exploitation in **El Salvador**. In **Guatemala**, many of the peace accord's commitments to women, including indigenous women, were yet to be implemented and impunity also affected the increasing number of women being murdered.

Gender inequality was often more pronounced in conflicts and crises and the direct and indirect impact of security measures had brought complex consequences to women in the occupied **Palestinian territories**, Ms Ertürk said.

She had supported referring the situation in **Sudan's** western Darfur region to the Rome-based International Criminal Court (ICC) because of the national justice system's inability to ensure accountability for crimes.

Trafficking

The Commission's Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Sigma Huda, said national legislation should be changed to protect victims of trafficking. At the moment, trafficked persons were criminalized and prosecuted as illegal aliens, undocumented workers, or irregular migrants, rather than as victims of a crime. New York, Apr 7 2005. Read more on:

<"<http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/121FB6D9BB718ED8C1256FDB004F80D7?opendocument>">

IAW Commission Convenor on Violence, Prostitution and Trafficking: Siri Hangeland, Norway.

Resource members: Thorbjorg Inge Jonsdottir, Iceland; Anje Wiersinga, Netherlands; Dagny Wagner, Germany; Jessica Kehl-Lauff, Switzerland.

SMALL RAYS OF LIGHT BREAK THROUGH

AIDS Kids, Calcutta, India

There are over 1,500 children in the city who or whose parents are suffering from AIDS. The state government and a voluntary organisation, Bhoruka Public Welfare Trust, have come together to set up a shelter for them. "This idea is unique in the city. No one thought of this before," said Bhoruka deputy director Rakesh Agrawal.

Elaborating on the centre, which will come up in Rajarhat by the end of this month, Agrawal said a large number of children lose their parents to AIDS. Many of them are also infected with the deadly virus. "We get cases where kids are literally lost in this world for no fault of theirs, as their parents died of AIDS," he added.

A family faces several problems if any of its members is infected with HIV. One of them is financial, as a major part of its resources has to be spent on the treatment, which is very expensive. The children of the family have to bear the brunt of the problem, said Agrawal.

A Halfway House and a Sickbay

The Rajarhat centre will have two facilities. "It will have a halfway house for children between four and 14 years. They will be provided shelter in the house for six months to one year, during which the trust will approach NGOs, who will make an arrangement for the inmates. That is the general idea." The centre will also have a "sick bay" to treat the HIV-infected kids free. The halfway house will have arrangements for 25 kids and the sick bay for 20.

"Hope Foundation, an Irish agency, is funding the Rs 25-lakh project. It will provide the centre its running cost for two years," Agrawal said. He will also request the government to ensure free supply of anti-retroviral medicines.

HIV wards

Another piece of news for HIV-infected adults is from National Institute for Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED), which is setting up an HIV ward at the Belegkata Infectious Diseases and BG Hospital. "Diagnosis and treatment at the ward will be free. There will be 10 beds, five each for male and female patients. We hope to open the ward very soon," said NICED director Sujit Kumar Bhattacharya. On http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050404/asp/calcutta/story_4569286.asp
Send to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

UNICEF - Arab World makes much Progress in Child Welfare

With rapid reduction in child mortality rates and major improvements in immunization, access to clean water and increased school attendance, Arab nations have come a long way in reaching global development targets, a senior United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) official said today.

An Arab World fit for Children

But some 7.5 million Arab children are still out of school, 13.5 million are working and several million are affected by armed conflict or threatened by other forms of violence, abuse and lack of opportunities to participate in decision making, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Rima Salah told media representatives in Cairo. We need to work with the youth to address issues of curriculum reform, HIV/AIDS and the status of young girls in society," Ms Salah said, presenting highlights of the report, "An Arab World Fit for Children".

Priority areas

The milestone review of progress achieved and pending challenges facing the children and young people living in Arab countries, carried out by UNICEF at the request of the Arab League, stresses the need for increased investment in children and reflects on priority areas for the development and implementation of the 2004-2015 Arab Plan of Action For Children, issued by the Arab Summit last year in Tunis, Tunisia. "I am confident that future dialogue on the findings of this report will help

address one of the key developmental issues that has so far remained largely absent from the ongoing reform debate in the Arab world: that is the issue of children," Ms. Salah said.

Children facing violence

Protection measures in the Arab world need to be strengthened as children continue to face other forms of violence such as abuse, sexual exploitation and traditional harmful practices such as early marriage . UNICEF, New York, April 11, 2005

Convenor of the IAW Education Commission: Meena Pimpalpure, India.

Resource member: Heide Schlosser, Germany.

WOMEN PREDOMINANTLY SUFFER FROM NATURAL DISASTERS

Four times as many Women died in Tsunami

Up to four times as many women as men died in the Boxing Day Asian tsunami, according to a report published today by Oxfam International.

In four villages surveyed by the aid agency in the badly hit district of North Aceh in Indonesia, an average of 77% of the fatalities were women. In the worst affected village, Kuala Cangkoy, the proportion rose to 80%. Data collected from Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu state in southern India produced a figure of 73% female fatalities. In Sri Lanka, information was hard to confirm but anecdotal evidence suggested about two thirds of those who died were women.

Various reasons

The reasons vary, but among the common factors is that many men were out fishing or away from home, so had more opportunity to flee the tsunami. In general, men could run faster to escape the water and those caught in the sea used their greater strength to survive by clinging on to debris. In Aceh, the Indonesian province that bore the brunt of the disaster, many men have moved away from the province, which is beset by a separatist insurgency, to find work. Women, in contrast, were at home, and efforts to save their children slowed their flight.

In Indian coastal communities, women traditionally wait on the beaches to unload the fish from the boats. In Sri Lanka, researchers found few women could swim or climb trees.

Social disruption

As communities today mark the three-month anniversary of the tsunami, Oxfam's report warns of significant social disruption and exploitation of the women who remain in the affected communities. "The threat is that due to the shortage of women, they are going to have to marry younger and younger," said Ines Smith, an Oxfam gender adviser, who did much of the research in Aceh. "This means loss of education, pregnancy at a younger age and more pregnancies."

Men and women are finding the gender imbalance a problem, Oxfam says. Men who have lost their wives are struggling to rebuild a domestic life, while unmarried men are worried about how they will find a wife. "They don't know how to fill the voids," Ms Smith said.

No men's roles

Women survivors are having to plug gaps left by women who have died, and at the same time are not allowed to step into roles previously played by men, according to Aditi Kapoor, an Oxfam researcher in India. "Societies have assumed, for example, women don't need a boat if there's no man around," she said. "But women want boats. They can rent them out and make an income that way."

John Aglionby in Jakarta, Saturday March 26 2005, The Guardian

Sent to us by IAW member Helen Self

Speaking on ABC Radio Australia recently, Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA commented on the tragedy of women coming to terms with the loss of children in the tsunami and their feelings of guilt that they could not save their children.

ABC Radio Australia from Priscilla Todd

FIGHTING LAWS THAT CONDONE VIOLENCE

Women Can't Wait

A performance artist breathes life into women's rights across the globe.

Two years ago, the international human rights group, Equality Now, realized they had a public relations problem: how could they get people to pay attention to a disturbing message that they might not want to hear? The group had developed a human rights report highlighting laws in 45 countries that condone violence against women and girls. But laws make for dry reading, so to popularize their message, Equality Now asked performance artist Sarah Jones to make the report come alive.

Eight different personal stories

In "Women Can't Wait," Jones transforms herself from one character to another, voicing the stories of eight women from different countries including India, Japan, the U.S. and Jordan.

Jones uses only one prop to transform herself: a scarf that becomes a head wrap, a sash, or a doll. She alternately "becomes" Praveen, a woman from India, Tomoko from Japan, Hala from Jordan, switching accents and identities convincingly from one woman to the next. Each woman tells a personal story of living under laws that permit abuses such as marital rape, female genital mutilation and "honour killing" where a male relative is entitled to kill a female relative if he believes she has brought dishonour to the family name.'

Read more on <http://www.acfnewsresource.org/cgi-bin/printer.cgi?407>

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

Constance Rover, a distinguished member of the Alliance, has died aged 94. She originated the first university course in women's studies, at Northwestern Polytechnic, Kentish Town (now part of London Metropolitan University). She also wrote Women's Suffrage and Party Politics 1866-1914 (1967). Constance Rover also wrote poetry and one of her verses found its way into the Centenary Edition. Here it is the first stanza.

Three Meals a Day

Women's intellect who wants it?
Not her nearest, not her dearest,
They all wants three meals a day.
It is hard to say them nay.

Women's Day, March 8

Members of IAW Central Italy were planning to celebrate on Women's Day the homecoming of Guiliana Sgrema, a passionate woman journalist, working in Iraq. "No-one wrote more directly on the tragedies of the Iraqi war, of death, destruction and the mistreatment of women and children. No-one wrote more directly about the damage and harm being caused by the use of cluster bombs and heavy arms against innocent civilians", writes IAW Board member Bettina Corke from Italy. But there were no festivities on March 8. The shooting at Guiliana by American soldiers, wounding her and killing her bodyguard, raised a storm of protest in Italy, resulting in the withdrawal of Italian troops in Iraq in due time.

URLs - DECADES - EVENTS - CONFERENCES - REPORTS

Women, Work and Health, India

A Conference in Delhi on Women, Work and Health will take place on November 27-30 2005. The last date for abstract has been extended to 30th April. & Registration for early bird is: 1st May. Conference on Occupational Safety Health and the environment. See www.swi-delhi.org/wwh.

International Youth Forum, May 16th - 20th, 2005, Buenos Aires, Argentina

<http://www.youthcoalition.org/DEV/mambo2/>

Mobilising Young Women for Equality in Europe

A website for young EU women, in 11 languages, on <http://youngwomen.womenlobby.org/>
For youth in the EU in general see http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/index_en.html

Children with Disabilities

A charming website committed to the welfare of children with disabilities: <http://www.childraise.com/>

UN Committee adopts Draft Treaty against Nuclear Terrorism

After seven years of negotiations, a United Nations committee today adopted a draft international treaty to fight nuclear terrorism, with Secretary-General Kofi Annan calling on all states to sign on in order to pre-empt what he called "one of the most urgent threats of our time" that with one attack could change the world forever. New York, Apr 1 2005 . Read more on

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/13085.doc.htm>

For more details go to the UN News Centre at <http://www.un.org/news>

Commission on Human Rights - Geneva -14 March-22 April 2005

The texts of all draft resolutions and oral statements made during the session can be found on the extranet page of the Commission. See : <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/index.htm>

Strategic Alliances In Crime Prevention And Criminal Justice

Bangkok, Thailand, 18-25 April on http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime_cicp_congresses.html

Sixty years of the UN in 2005

The year 2005 marks the centenary of the birth of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. The GA's sixtieth session will start on 14 September with a three-day mid-term review of worldwide progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
The comprehensive report "<"<http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>">In Larger Freedom," will be the centre of the discussions. See also <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/events/2005/january.htm>

International Year of Microcredit 2005

Microcredit is an excellent tool for improving the economic independence of women.
Read more on <http://www.yearofmicrocredit.org/>

UNESCO – a Decade of Education on Sustainable Development

The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee Bulletin "LINK" reports that their new Website is available at <http://www.unesco.org/ngo-liaison-committee> On this website there is permanent information, but also often fascinating summary reports of expert hearings by the Joint Programme Commission (JPG).

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

This event has been launched officially on March 1 2005, in New York by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and UNESCO's Director Koïchiro Matsuura. UNESCO was tasked with leading the Decade and developing a draft International Implementation Scheme (IIS). Click for details somewhere in the article of Koïchiro Matsuura.

IAW is represented at UNESCO by Odette Goncet, Françoise Aujac and Ita Malot, France.

International Decade for Action - Water for Life 2005-2015

Read more on <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/>

Consumption – Globalisation – Environment - Hamburg, Germany

An Attac, BUND and Greenpeace Conference, in Cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, Energy, on June 3-5 2005 at the University of Hamburg, Germany. See also <http://www.mcplanet.com/>

What's the connection between environmental degradation and globalisation? Can I live the way I want - and is it sufficient to separate my waste? How much can I change in view of corporate power and political deadlocks? Or is the fault inherent to the system? What disappears through global economic thinking? What are the alternatives and what can I do to make them reality?

Sent to us by IAW member Annemarie Lopez.

IAW Commission Convenor for Sustainable Development: Ida Kurth, Germany.

Resource member: Meena Pimpalapur, India

Note

To avoid misunderstanding, we always send the IAW Newsletter twice: 1) in the body of the e-mail, and 2) as an attachment, saved in Word 97. Both have exactly the same content. The only difference is, that the attachment has a better lay-out, so it will be easy for Affiliates to copy it and send it by post to IAW members without e-mail.

Also, please advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address.

IAW Newsletter / News Flash	: Joke Sebus	<iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net>
International Women's News	: Priscilla Todd	<iaw.iwnews@toddsec.com>
Membership Officer	: Pat Richardson	<iaw.membership@tsn.cc>
Treasurer	: Marieluise Weber	<marieluise.weber@web.de>