

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES**

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

**Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales**

IAW NEWSLETTER April 2007, no. 5

Dear IAW members,



After two special editions of the newsletter, we are trying to catch up with news worldwide. UNIFEM has started an interesting initiative to train women in building peace and preventing sexual violence, during and after conflicts.

The UN is planning a new gender architecture - and IAW has put in a statement on gender mainstreaming in the whole of the UN architecture.

The Human Rights Council is tackling future water problems, in particular the dehydration in Africa, with women and children as the most vulnerable.

India will have soon a strict law on child abuse, and shadow reporting at CEDAW gives more opportunities for implementing women's rights at national and local level.

Books, events and conferences are as always at the end of the newsletter, including a new book written by one of our IAW members!

**UNIFEM launches Community-Based Programme to Support Women
in Peacebuilding and Prevention of Sexual Violence**

The United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM, is to embark on a two-year initiative to support women in their communities in building peace and preventing sexual violence during and after conflicts.

The programme, "Supporting Women's Engagement in Peacebuilding and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict: Community-Led Approaches," has been launched during an inception workshop in Lira, Uganda, from 16 to 20 April.

It is funded through a US\$6.5 million grant by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID).

Six countries in conflict and post-conflict situations are to be included: *Afghanistan, Haiti, Liberia, Rwanda, Timor-Leste and Uganda.*

The six countries in the programme represent a wide range of conflict and post-conflict contexts, with unique opportunities and challenges. Partnerships and strategies will target multiple levels of engagement, from women's inclusion in formal peace processes to co-policing strategies in neighbourhoods, work with customary or traditional authorities, and support for services for survivors. In **Liberia and Rwanda**, for example, a focus will be on building the gender sensitivity of local police and on improving women's access to local justice institutions.

In **Timor-Leste and Uganda**, UNIFEM will work to train and sensitize members of village councils on community prevention mechanisms for sexual and gender-based violence, including a need for social and economic empowerment of women.

In **Afghanistan and Haiti**, a small trust fund will be established to support innovative community peacebuilding initiatives by local NGOs.

More on: http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=574

UNDP, OHCHR, UNHCR, OCHA, UNIFEM, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and DPKO have joined forces to improve the quality of programming to address sexual violence, to increase the coordination of efforts for comprehensive prevention and response services, and to improve accountability.

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
Putting the integration of a gender perspective into the Human Rights Council agenda**

We would like to thank again the Government of Argentina and all the countries which highlighted the need to provide adequate space to deal with both the human rights of women as well as the integration of a gender perspective throughout the entire work of the Council. Indeed we consider that this could have been among the Council's principles.

Here, however, we wish to address more specifically the issue of the integration of a gender perspective which we view essentially as a capacity-building tool to implement the Resolution on gender mainstreaming proposed by Chile and adopted by the Commission in 1998.

We see this as a mechanism whereby the Council would evaluate how well it has taken into account a gender perspective in all of its substantive work by considering explicitly how women and girls are affected differently than men and boys by situations covered in the various mandates of the Council mechanisms. This exercise could lead to recommendations to improve the integration of a gender perspective in the following year of the Council's substantive work. This process might also assist Council members in identifying thematic issues requiring a more in-depth discussion within the framework of the Council annual programme of work.

Permit us to make a few concrete suggestions regarding the potential place of such a mechanism within the permanent Council agenda.

1. It could be included as a sub-item of item 2 whereby a working group of the Council, assisted by the Office of the High Commissioner, carries out the evaluation and provides a report leading to recommendations for improvements which might provide elements for a Council Resolution and lead to the planning of the following year's analysis.
2. Alternatively, the technical capacity-building aspects of our proposition would make it compatible with item 4 where it could also figure as a sub-item.

Statement by Hélène Sackstein, IAW representative at the Human Rights Council in Geneva

NEW UN AGENCY FOR WOMEN

A coalition of over 140 international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women's groups is gratified that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is expressing public support for the creation of a new UN agency for women.

"We believe the public support of the secretary-general is a very important step in moving closer towards the implementation of this new women's entity," said June Zeitlin, executive director of the New York-based Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO).

The proposal for a new UN women's agency was made last November by a 15-member "High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence", comprising heads of government, former world political leaders and senior government and UN officials.

Gender architecture

The proposal for the creation of a new gender architecture includes the consolidation of three existing UN entities -- the UN Development Fund for Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women -- under a single new UN agency to be headed by an under-secretary-general, the third highest ranking post in the world body. But its implementation will require the blessings of the 192-member General Assembly, which has not given any indication of how it will respond.

Zeitlin said the three existing women's units have a total budget of about 65 million dollars, compared to 450 million dollars for the UN Population Fund and about two billion dollars for the UN children's agency, UNICEF.

She also pointed out that the panel had recommended an initial target of some 200 million dollars for the proposed new women's agency.

UN, March 12 2007. By Thalif Deen, InterPress Services

CEDAW - From Global to Local

Since 1997, IWRAW Asia Pacific has run a project called From Global to Local which has facilitated the participation of women activists from over 100 organisations at the review of their government's report by the CEDAW Committee in New York.

Their involvement in this process contributes to two interrelated, important aspects of human rights work at the international level:

1) the setting of norms and standards for human rights practice;
2) to monitor and challenge non-compliance of their governments with the standards to which they have committed themselves internationally.
This process will help facilitate the application of international human rights norms at the domestic level.

Preparation of a Shadow/Alternative Report

The participation of women in this [process](#) begins with the preparation of a shadow/alternative report, written in collaboration with other women's groups. IWRAW Asia Pacific provides women's groups with [guidelines for the preparation of these shadow reports](#) and offers technical assistance/suggestions in the writing/formatting of this. We also assist in the distribution of these reports to the CEDAW Committee members. *IWRAW AP - International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific* http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/local_global.htm

Use of Shadow Reports by the CEDAW Committee

Indonesia - The alternative information provided by the shadow report of Indonesian women's groups was included by the CEDAW Committee in relation to the issues of sex roles and stereotyping, as well as the reproductive rights of women.

India - The shadow report by Indian NGOs was utilised by the CEDAW Committee to question the State's role in relation to women in armed conflict, caste-based violence against women, and the plurality of personal laws that set different standards of rights for different groups of women.

Sri Lanka - CENWOR coordinated the updating of the Sri Lankan Shadow Report and used its experience with the baseline report of the Facilitating Project not only to provide data on the situation of domestic violence, but also an analysis of State action in relation to CEDAW. This contributed to an effective review and a useful set of Concluding Comments.

Follow-up on Concluding Comments at the national level

Zimbabwe - At the 18th CEDAW Session, the government of Zimbabwe was praised for repealing the Legal Age of Majority Act 1982 which denied women legal adult status. Upon their return home, however, the government announced that it would reinstate the Act. Drawing on their experiences at the UN, the four Zimbabwean women activists who had participated in the From Global to Local project and observed their government's review by the CEDAW Committee were able to widely publicise the contradiction in State action.

The government subsequently withdrew its intention to reinstate this discriminatory Act.

South Africa - A recommendation for a specific law to prohibit discrimination was made by South African women at the CEDAW review in 1998. This was echoed by the CEDAW Committee in its Concluding Comments. In September 2000, the South African government passed a law called the Promotion of Equality and the Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination Act. This Act has a section on gender discrimination.

The CEDAW Committee meets twice a year in January and June at the United Nations in New York for three weeks at a time.

A compilation of Shadow Reports (2005-present) that have been submitted to the CEDAW Committee are available on: http://www.iwraw-ap.org/using_cedaw/writing_shadow.htm

Hélène Sackstein advises that CEDAW is moving to Geneva this summer.

Fighting human trafficking

The United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) jointly launched The Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, choosing the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, on March the 27th, to fight a modern scourge that may entrap up to 27 million people at any given time in a market valued at \$32 billion.

A booming trade

“Slavery is a booming international trade, less obvious than 200 years ago for sure, but all around us,” UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)) Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa told a ceremony

in London today, which is also the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire.

The UN International Labour Organization (ILO) calculates the minimum number of people in forced labour at 12.3 million, while research by Free the Slaves, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in the United States, puts the number at 27 million.

Which countries?

A recent UNODC report called 'Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns' identifies Thailand, China, Nigeria, Albania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine among the countries that are the greatest sources of trafficked persons.

Thailand, Japan, Israel, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Turkey and the US are cited as the most common destinations.

Overall people from 127 countries are exploited in 137 nations.

More on <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=22009&Cr=slave&Cr1=>

New Delhi - strict law on child abuse soon

New legislation to protect child rights will soon make it compulsory for doctors, teachers, social workers and other care-givers, who are in constant touch with children in juvenile homes, schools and shelters, to report cases of child abuse to the authorities.

The 'Offences Against Child Bill' that is in the drafting stage, will cover aspects of sexual, emotional, physical and mental abuse in a comprehensive manner setting out stringent punishments for offenders. The ministry of women and child development (WCD) felt that the existing laws were inadequate to recognize and penalize the offenders. "The legislation will provide the authorities with a mechanism to identify and punish offenders for crimes against children," a senior official said.

Inadequate protection

Officials and civil society consultations revealed that there was inadequate protection for abuse of boys. This has led to an increase in paedophile tourism in the country.

Existing legislation do not recognize sex tourism, grooming of child for sexual purposes, violence against children, emotional abuse or instances like intentionally starving a child or transmitting a life-t. The bill will also tackle unlawful sexual contact, using children for begging, abduction and wrongful detention, using children for pornography, corporal punishment, ragging, intimidation, intoxicating children, abetting and involving children in armed conflict.

The Indian Network for Combat Trafficking (INCT) is the wider platform where all civil society. Organisations can come together and discuss problems, voice their opinions and work coherently as a team to combat trafficking (prevention, rescue, repatriation, rehabilitation), to end the sexual exploitation and abuse of children and women.

To join the network, please do write to combattrafficking@yahoo.co.in

By Himanshi Dhawan , TNN/ Times of India 14/3/2007 and sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

WATER

"Extreme Water Events" Predicted

PRETORIA, Apr 26 (IPS) - In Africa, 25 countries are expected to experience water scarcity or water stress in the next 20 to 30 years. This translates into 16 percent or 230 million of Africa's population facing water scarcity by 2025, and 32 percent or 460 million people living in water-stressed countries by that time.

This is according to a paper presented by Ahmed Nejjar of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) regional office for Africa at a conference looking at water management. The two-day conference, entitled Water Management Africa 2007, was attended by representatives from multilateral, nongovernmental and governmental agencies. It ended in the South African capital Pretoria on April 24.

Signs of climate change can be seen in decreasing rainfall and severe droughts in Africa, environmentalists warned at the conference. River levels are dropping. In extreme cases, rivers are drying up.

Lake Victoria

This scenario is reflected across Africa. For example, the level of Lake Victoria, Africa's largest inland

fresh water, has been decreasing in the past decade which has affected Uganda's electricity supply. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania all extract water from the lake.

Groundwater

The Limpopo river, which is shared between South Africa and its northern neighbour Zimbabwe, gave its name to South Africa's Limpopo province with its population of eight million. "The majority of the people of Limpopo depend on groundwater. The river feeds the groundwater. When it is dry, it affects the groundwater," said Classen.

"Groundwater is extremely important in Africa. It is estimated that more than 75 percent of the African population use groundwater as their main source of drinking water," said Nejjar in the paper he presented at the conference.

A selection of an article by Moyiga Nduru. More on <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=37500>

The Human Rights Council and Access to Water *Action by IAW Members is recommended*

In its Decision 2/104 on Human Rights and Access to Water, the UN Human Rights Council (the Council) requested:

“(...) the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, taking into account the views of States and other stakeholders, to conduct, within existing resources, a detailed study on the scope and content of the relevant human rights obligations related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation under international human rights instruments, which includes relevant conclusions and recommendations thereon, to be submitted prior to the sixth session of the Council.”

The High Commissioner would be grateful to receive any relevant information for preparation of the requested study for submission to the Human Rights Council at its sixth session (September 2007) in compliance with paragraph 5 of that decision. The information received will be used for the study and will also be put on the OHCHR website. Information would be particularly welcome on:

- a) Views on international human rights obligations to be taken into account in relation to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- b) National legislation or draft legislation related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation (constitution, specific law, regulation, etc.), including with regard to private sector provision of related services.
- c) Examples of judicial decisions related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- d) National plans of action, development programmes, public policies or emergency responses related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- e) The impact of these national laws, judicial decisions, plans of action, development programmes, public policies and other measures in promoting or restricting equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- f) Examples of approaches considered to represent “best practice” related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- g) Any other existing initiatives and standards relating to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and the scope and legal status of these initiatives.

Such information should be sent to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Office at Geneva, CH 1211 Geneva 10, by 15 April 2007 either by post or preferably through e-mail at the following address: water@ohchr.org

Useful links:

Human Rights Council Decision 2/104 – Human Rights and Access to Water, in English, French and Spanish.

General Comment No. 15 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Sub-Commission's Guidelines for the Realization of the Right to Drinking Water and Sanitation adopted by the UN Sub-Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, August 2006
OHCHR, WHO, COHRE, CESR, Water Aid, The Right to Water, 2003.

UNDP, Human Development Report 2006: Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water

crisis.

Sent to us by Jessica Kehl, IAW representative to the United Nations in Geneva

BOOKS - EVENTS - CONFERENCES - INTERNATIONAL DAYS

The Black Tongue, by Anjana Basu

Set in contemporary West Bengal, *Black Tongue* is the story of a young servant girl and her employer whom destiny brings together in an intricate dance of love and hate. Street-smart and sassy, 16-year-old Maya has aspirations beyond her means. Then she suddenly disappears and the employer, Amrita, is charged with her death.

About the author, from an interview by Corey Ginsberg on "Green Plastic Buckets".

Even though Basu has experience in several different genres, she does not label herself a poet or an essayist. Instead, she considers herself a writer in a larger and more encompassing sense. In her writing is full of fluid and poetic imagery. Basu attributes this style to the blurring of the line between genres. "Prose can be poetic, too," she notes. Although she draws inspiration from many writers, Basu says she has been most influenced by Kipling, Rushdie, Tagore and Hemingway.

Publisher Roli Books ISBN 8186939326 Edition 1st Edition, Paperback

Congratulations to IAW member Anjana Basu, with her new book!

Shame of War: sexual violence against women and girls in conflict' - a reference book and photo essay of portraits and testimonies of the sexual violence women suffer when men go to war. It examines the scope and nature of this violence and looks at the different ways the international community is addressing sexual violence against women and girls during and after conflict.

Female Chauvinist Pigs, by Ariel Levy

"With *Female Chauvinist Pigs*", Ariel Levy becomes feminism's newest and most provocative voice, brilliantly laying bare the contradictions and evasions and self-deceptions that pass for empowerment." See also: <http://www.arielleavy.net/>

The Year in Review 2006, published by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), gives a snapshot picture of civil society engagement in the policy and normative work of the UN and reviews the various consultations, forums, policy dialogues, hearings, CSO advisory committees, that have taken place throughout the year 2006.

The year 2006 saw considerable interaction across the United Nations system with Secretariats, Agencies, Programmes and Funds engaging with civil society in a wide range of ways and on a wide diversity of subjects, be it through special consultations, Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly, or activities around special review conferences, such as the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference, or meetings of the Functional Commissions of ECOSOC and on-going activities of Specialized Agencies, Programmes and Funds. The Year in Review 2006 is available in English as a pdf document at: <http://www.un-ngls.org/site/IMG/pdf/YiR2006.pdf>

14 May - 1 June 2007 - **CEDAW** - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 38th session, New York, on <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/38sess.htm>
Initial reports: Mauretania, Mozambique, Niger, Pakistan, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Syrian Arabic Republic, Vanuatu.

30 April - 18 May 2007, **Committee against Torture**, Geneva, 38th session. Experts to Consider Reports of Denmark, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Japan and Poland

30 April - 18 May 2007, **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, Geneva, 38th session. Reports of Nepal, Hungary, Netherlands (Antilles), Finland and Latvia to be considered.

14 May - 29 June 2007 - **Conference on Disarmament**, Geneva

International Days

22 May - International Day on **Biological Diversity**, on

<http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/outreach/awareness/biodiv-day-2007.shtml>

31 May - **No Tobacco Day**, on <http://www.who.int/tobacco/communications/events/wntd/2007/en/>

5 June - **World Environment Day**, on <http://www.unep.org/wed/2007/english/>

Note

We are sending this Newsletter as an attachment, saved in Word 97.

Please be so kind to advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, so we can mail them this Newsletter too.

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