

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

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

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

IAW NEWSLETTER August 2007, no. 9



Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

More than 300 natural disasters, affecting 117 million people, in one year. It's worrying. There is heartwarming relief, in particular by the UN, but what we need is adequate worldwide measures to prevent disasters and to limit the worst. The conferences on Climate Change, in Vienna at the end of August and in Bali in December, are promising. There is progress, in particular in planning better water management. But ...where are the women?

Also in this newsletter: celebration of twenty-five years of the Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination of Women (CEDAW), preparing for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 2008, Amnesty taking a big step forward in women's rights, and the appointment of Noeleen Heyzer as Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Women largely absent in the decision making process on Climate Change

When the United Nations concluded a two-day debate on the potential devastation from climate change, it covered a lot of territory: deforestation, desertification, greenhouse gases, renewable energy sources, bio-fuels and sustainable development.

In a report on "Energy and Gender", the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said women have been largely absent in the decision-making process, and their roles in environmental management are often overlooked.

Report "Energy and Gender" on: <http://www.undp.org/energy/engmdgtop3gen.htm>

More on: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38872>

Experts prepare for UN conference on global warming

One thousand representatives from governments, business and industry, environmental organizations and research institutions will gather in Vienna from 27 to 31 August to set the stage for a major United Nations conference from 3 to 14 December in Bali.

The conference in Bali, Indonesia, seeks to determine future action on mitigation, adaptation, the global carbon market and financing responses to climate change for the period after the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol. That pact, appended to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), contains legally binding emission reduction targets through 2012.

A successor for the Kyoto Protocol ?

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who will convene a high-level meeting on the issue in New York on 24 September, has [said](#) a successor to the Kyoto Protocol must be ready for ratification three years before 2012 to allow time for countries to ratify it.

More on: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=23502&Cr=climate&Cr1=change>

UN launches new Climate Change Internet site

A new United Nations Internet site was launched: "Gateway to the UN System's Work on Climate Change", that highlights the wide-ranging work of the various parts of the United Nations system on climate change. The address of the new website is <http://www.un.org/climatechange>.

WATER AND SANITATION

World Water Week

Addressing the 17th annual World Water Week on August 14, executive director of the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) Anders Berntell warned that 1.4 billion people now live in regions where there is a real, physical water scarcity, and an additional 1.1 billion live in regions where there is water stress due to over-consumption.

The annual five-day meeting is described as the world's largest single gathering of water experts, including officials from more than 150 organisations.

More on <http://www.worldwaterweek.org/>

Groundwater resources

Addressing the 17th annual World Water Week in the Swedish capital of Stockholm, UN Under-Secretary-General Anna Tibaijuka, executive director of the Nairobi-based UN-Habitat, said the explosive growth of urban centres over the last 30 years, which continues unabated in most of the developing world, is rapidly depleting once plentiful water resources.

"Several metropolitan cities are knee-deep in problems", she said, citing the example of Mexico City, which has sunk some eleven metres over the past 70 years.

The cause? Withdrawal of water from the city's groundwater sources, or aquifer, far below.

"We urgently need to find new approaches which better utilise our abundant human resources, our precious natural resources and our scarce financial resources," she added.

A study by the Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) says a minimum investment of 8.0 billion dollars annually would assure that every country in that region could halve the proportion of people without access to water supply and improved sanitation.

More on: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38898>

Droughts in China and Africa, and massive floods in Asia and Africa

Flood unites hearts of women

Jenna Meredith who was made homeless and lost all her possessions when her home in Hull in England, was one of 17,000 properties hit in a flash flood on June 25, was sent to Orissa by Oxfam for five days last week to witness the submerged villages for herself.

She discovered that the "worst in living memory" floods in India were in a different category from the "worst in living memory" floods she had left behind in Yorkshire. She said: "I have lost everything, but it's nothing compared with what they have lost. When I arrived, an area the size of Britain was underwater.

Twenty million people: that's the entire population of northern England. Their homes, their livelihoods, everything gone. Hundreds of people have also lost their lives. When the families I met in Orissa were told that I, too, was a flood victim, they put their arms around me and consoled me. They still had the compassion and the heart to understand that I, too, had suffered, despite their suffering being 10 times worse.

"In the village of Dasapari, floodwaters broke through an embankment sweeping away hundreds of homes in a tidal wave. When I arrived, they were living in a long row of shacks covered with plastic sheeting. They were cooking using twigs and rubbish gathered from the riverbank.

"Walking through the remains of the village, Annapurna Beheri was one of the first women I met. She had lost the family home she shared with her mother, her two sisters and her children. The family's bread and butter, their shop, was also gone. Like me, Annapurna was 40 and like me her life has been turned upside-down. I think myself lucky now."

By Amit Roy on http://www.telegraphindia.com/1070809/asp/frontpage/story_8168560.asp

Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

UN Relief for Floods across South Asia

United Nations humanitarian agencies continue to step up their relief efforts in the wake of the recent deadly floods across South Asia, distributing food and emergency supplies, vaccinating against infectious diseases and launching public awareness campaigns on the importance of using clean water. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have so far distributed 90 tons of high-protein biscuits in Bangladesh and plan to deliver another 24 tons this week.

In Nepal UNICEF has provided more than 2,000 mosquito nets. In addition, the agency has delivered radio broadcasts in the country's four regional languages on the need for water purification to prevent

the outbreak of diseases.

45 million people affected

An estimated 45 million people across India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan have been affected by the flooding, with many of them forced to leave their homes. At least 2,200 people have been killed. UNICEF is distributing water purification packs, rehydration packs and water jerry cans in India, where it is also conducting a large-scale vaccination campaign to prevent an outbreak of chicken pox. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) has already announced that it is increasing its support of South Asian governments as they respond to the flooding, including by drawing from the Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)).

Elsewhere, in Sudan, which has been hit by its own recent floods, OCHA now estimates that at least 365,000 people have been affected, and the number of people requiring food assistance is also likely to rise.

The World Population Foundation ([WPF](#)) is providing food rations to some 38,500 people in northern Sudan, the worst-affected region of the country, but also to more than 5,000 people in the south of the vast African nation.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will also establish a Water Financing Partnership Facility which intends to mobilise about 100 million dollars in co-financing and investments from development partners in the North.

117 million people have suffered from some 300 natural disasters this year

Meanwhile, according to UN figures, more than 117 million people have suffered from some 300 natural disasters, most of them water-related, this year alone.

These catastrophes include devastating droughts in China and Africa, and massive flooding in Asia and Africa -- all of them costing nearly 15 billion dollars in damages.

These natural disasters are also attributed primarily to the devastating effects of climate change.

Report "Asia Water Watch 2015 on: <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Asia-Water-Watch/default.asp>

Peru Quake

For several minutes, the Nazca and South American tectonic plates ground together 25 miles below the towns of Pisco, Ica and Chincha, and the results have been devastating.

The quake shook with such a force that many of the reinforced concrete buildings in the three towns were reduced to rubble. The majority of local residents live in adobe-style mud brick homes; many of those bricks literally crumbled and turned into dust.

The devastation extends for miles beyond the epicentre and many rural towns and villages have been flattened.

With homes destroyed or damaged and with frequent aftershocks, thousands of people are living in the streets. In some cases belongings have been salvaged and uncannily set up next to the rubble to resemble the former interior.

It's winter in Peru and the nights are freezing cold. Those sleeping outside run the risk of illness.

From a blog on: <http://www.alertnet.org/db/blogs/34417/2007/07/20-094606-1.htm>

Manila Quake

A magnitude 6.5 earthquake hit the southeastern Philippines on Monday, the U.S. Geological Survey reported. The USGS said the quake was offshore and very shallow at 6.3 miles (10 km) deep and was centered 140 miles (226 km) east-southeast of Davao City on the island of Mindanao.

WOMEN AND THE UNITED NATIONS

Twenty-five years of CEDAW

The CEDAW Committee celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary on Monday, 23 July 2007.

Statements made during this festive occasion, including an overview on 25 years of CEDAW, are to be found on: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/25anniversary.htm>

The Committee held its 39th session at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 23 July - 10 August 2007. Official documents and a list of country reports from States Parties to be examined during this session are on: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/39sess.htm>

Singapore

Members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women welcomed the significant progress made by women in *Singapore (third period)*, but expressed concern over the

application of sharia law to Muslim marriages, the insufficient legal framework to counter discrimination, the treatment of foreign domestic workers, and the Government's reservations to articles of the Women's Convention.

Introducing her country's report, Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, said that people were Singapore's only resource, and its public policies were based on developing the full potential of every individual, male or female.

The 2006 Gender Empowerment Measure of the Human Development Index ranked the country 18 out of 175 countries.

On: <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/indicators/230.html>

Editor's comment: Hongkong, Singapore and the Republic of Korea are ranking high on the Index!

First woman to Head ESCAP

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of Noeleen Heyzer of Singapore as Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Born in Singapore, she received a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts from the University of Singapore and a doctorate in social sciences from Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

Ms Heyzer is the first Executive Director from the South to head the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the leading operational agency within the United Nations to promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

Since joining UNIFEM, she has worked on strengthening women's economic security and rights; promoting women's leadership in conflict resolution, peace building and governance; ending violence against women; and combating HIV/AIDS from a gender perspective. She played a critical role in the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and undertook extensive missions to conflict-affected countries worldwide to ensure its implementation to make a difference in women's lives on the ground.

UNESCAP

Headquartered in Bangkok, UNESCAP is the largest of the UN five Regional Commissions in terms of its membership, population served and area covered. More information on UNESCAP is available from www.unescap.org

Commission on the Status of Women 2008

The online discussion on the priority theme of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2008: "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women". Around 1,300 people from a wide range of countries and organizations registered, and more than 250 contributions to the discussion were received.

While the online discussion has been closed, you can still consult the web board at:

<http://esaconf.un.org/wb/?boardid=financingforgenderequality>.

The issues, findings and recommendations highlighted during the four-week discussion will be published in a report of the online discussion at:

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/financing_gender_equality/egm_financing_gender_equality.htm

Expert group in Oslo, Norway

The Division for the Advancement of Women is organizing an expert group meeting on the CSW priority theme in Oslo, Norway, at the beginning of September 2007. The expert group meeting will be followed by a report of the Secretary-General, a high-level roundtable, and an expert panel on the priority theme "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (25 February to 7 March 2008). The Commission expects to adopt agreed conclusions on the priority theme with recommendations for further action by all stakeholders involved. On: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw> Kindly refer to the website of the online discussion website at: <http://esaconf.un.org/wb/?boardid=financingforgenderequality>

TO BE OR NOT TO BE A MOTHER SHOULD ALWAYS BE A WOMAN'S CHOICE

Amnesty - abortion in case of rape, incest, violence

After over two years of discussion and debate, Amnesty International finally announced last week that it will be campaigning for women to have access to abortion in cases of rape, incest or violence, or where the pregnancy jeopardises a mother's life or health.

This is a huge step forward for women's rights worldwide, especially in areas of conflict where rape is employed as a weapon of war or as a tool for ethnic cleansing.

Every year [80,000](#) women across the world die as a result of unsafe abortion. History has shown us time and time again that denying access to abortion does not stop women from terminating unwanted pregnancies, all it does is drive them underground, more often than not into the hands of backstreet abortionists.

Alternatively, denying abortion forces women into taking their own desperate measures, and contributes to 13% of global maternal deaths annually.

Faced with this staggering death toll, and with the systematic rape of the women of Darfur, Amnesty International, the world's foremost human rights campaigning organisation, surely had no choice but to take last Friday's decision?

Unsurprisingly, this decision has led to an [outpouring of condemnation](#) from religious bodies, most notably from the Roman Catholic church. Amnesty has been quick to point out that this decision does not signal a move towards recognising abortion as a woman's right, that it is only advocating abortion in certain circumstances.

More on: http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/cath_elliot/2007/08/valuing_womens_lives.html
Sent to us by IAW member Helen Self.

BEING A MOTHER IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD IS NOT EASY

The Best and Worst Places to be a Mother

The eighth annual Mothers' Index helps document conditions for mothers and children in 140 countries - 41 developed nations and 99 in the developing world - and shows where mothers fare best and where they face the greatest hardships. All countries for which sufficient data were available are included in the Index. Below are the countries that ranked highest and lowest on the list.

<i>Top Ten</i>		<i>Bottom Ten</i>	
1	Sweden	131	Djibouti
2	Iceland	132	Burkina Faso
2	Norway	133	Ethiopia
4	New Zealand	134	Eritrea
4	Australia	135	Angola
4	Denmark	136	Guinea-Bissau
7	Finland	137	Chad
8	Belgium	138	Yemen
9	Spain	139	Sierra Leone
10	Germany	140	Niger

Why should Save the Children be so concerned with mothers? Because 75 years of field experience has taught us that the quality of children's lives depends on the health, security and well-being of their mothers.

In short, providing mothers with access to education, economic opportunities and maternal and child health care, including family planning, gives mothers and their children the best chance to survive and thrive.

For an explanation of the ranking system and to see a full listing, [download the complete Mothers' Index](#). More on: <http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/mothers/2007/Mothers-Index-2007.pdf>

Sent to us by IAW Secretary Alison Brown

COMPUTER SWALLOWED GRANDMA

The computer swallowed grandma. Yes, honestly its true.
She pressed 'control' and 'enter' And disappeared from view.
It devoured her completely, The thought just makes me squirm.
She must have caught a virus Or been eaten by a worm.

I've searched through the recycle bin And files of every kind;
I've even used the internet, But nothing did I find.
In desperation, I asked Jeeves My searches to refine.

The reply from him was negative, Not a thing was found 'online'.

So, if inside your 'Inbox,' My Grandma you should see,
Please 'Copy', 'Scan' and 'Paste' her And send her back to me!

Sent to us by IAW member Pat Richardson

UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination meets with States parties

August 14th, Geneva. As to issues of concern that the Committee wished to address, Mr. de Gouttes, chairperson of the Committee, noted that, to date, of the 173 States parties, 18 were behind more than 10 years in the submission of their reports; 8 of them for more than 20 years; 4 for more than 15 years; and 30 for more than 5 years – 4 of whom had never submitted their initial reports. That was a serious matter for concern for the Committee.

Non-governmental organisations

The Committee had also enhanced its relations with non-governmental organizations.

In addition to sending in shadow reports, non-governmental organizations often had informal meetings to exchange views with Experts before the consideration of State party reports.

The Committee had also been working to strengthen its relations with the other organs of the United Nations system, in particular the Special Rapporteurs. Among others, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of discrimination, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on prevention of genocide, and the Group of Experts responsible for implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

For example, the Committee has examined the situation of Pakistan, without the report of the government of Pakistan. The Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) has submitted a shadow report. *The full ACHR report is available at <http://www.achrweb.org/reports/cerd/Pakistan-CERD2007.pdf>*

EVENTS - CONFERENCES

* **UN General Assembly** - Closing of the 61st session on 17 September, opening of the 62nd session on 18 September 2007. General information (agenda, resolutions, etc.) on: <http://www.un.org/ga/61/>

* 25 February to 7 March 2008 - 52nd session of the **Commission on the Status of Women**. On <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/>.

* Expert Group Meeting on the theme of "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" (4 to 7 September 2007 in Oslo, Norway)

* 40th Session of CEDAW (14 January to 1 February 2008)

* 41st Session of CEDAW (30 June to 18 July 2008)

* Human Rights Council, 6th session: 10 to 28 September 2007

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.

IAW Newsletter / News Flash	: Joke Sebus	< iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net >
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