

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

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

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales



IAW NEWSLETTER – January 2006, no. 1
Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

"Political participation and leadership of women" is one of the subjects of the Commission on the Status of Women. This seems particularly timely in light of strong voter swings to elect women as national leaders in countries that are quite diverse in culture, politics and history. The current handful of women leaders carry the hopes of millions of people and particularly women for a better life, less corruption and a more peaceful world. They are also role models for women in their own countries as well as in the international arena. Surfing the net for political growth for women, your editors found some unexpected gains, but there still is an overall slow progress for women in politics in general. As always, the attendance of the IAW delegation at CSW is certainly very important! What is the effect of quotas? A worldwide study, "Women, Quotas and Politics", gives an overview of various types of quotas and it throws light over the troublesome implementation process. Edited by Drude Dahlerup, University of Stockholm.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

"Enhancing Participation of Women in Development through an Enabling Environment for Achieving Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women"

The Expert Group Meeting will address the following questions:

What is the interrelationship between health, education and work for enabling women's participation in development?

At national level, which core policies, institutions, mechanisms and strategies have been proven effective in increasing women's capabilities, assets and agency in the areas of education, health and work?

At local and household levels, which strategies have ensured that women effectively seized opportunities created by more favourable national laws, policies, infrastructure, institutions, services, etc?

What lessons learned can be drawn on factors that facilitate or hinder an enabling environment for women's participation?

On the basis of its findings, the EGM will propose policy recommendations to different actors, including Governments, United Nations entities, other international and regional organizations, and civil society. Bangkok, Thailand, 8-11 Nov. 2005.

On <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/enabling-environment2005/index.html>

IAW Convenor for Environment and Sustainable Development, Ida Kurth

"Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership"

The findings and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting will be presented at the panel discussion on equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels during the 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for 2001-2006, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will consider "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels" as one of two thematic issues during its fiftieth session in 2006.

In order to contribute to a further understanding of this issue and to assist the Commission in its deliberations, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

(IPU), has been organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 24 to 27 October 2005.

On <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/index.html>

IAW Convenor for Civil and Political Rights, Lene Pind

IAW President Rosy Weiss, Chairperson of the Vienna NGO Committee on CSW

Over the years the Vienna NGO Committee regularly organised large conferences, some of them jointly with the CONGO office in Vienna, reaching out mainly to NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe, on issues closely related to the work of the United Nations as a whole. To mention just a few: Making the Forward Looking Strategies work; The Optional Protocol to CEDAW; Racism and Xenophobia; Media, ICTs and Women; Women's Rights – Human Rights; Our Vision for the Future.

UN Commissions in Vienna

It also concentrated on the UN Commissions situated in Vienna, i.e. those on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the one on Narcotic Drugs. Cooperation with these Commissions has been close and fruitful, including cooperation within the framework of two other NGO Committees, namely the Vienna Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and the Vienna NGO Committee on Narcotic Drugs.

Transnational Organised Crime

The UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime came into force in September 2003 and its relevant Protocol concerning Trafficking in December 2003. This shameful issue has been in the centre of interest of NGO representatives of the Vienna Committee. Together with the permanent IAW representative to the UN Office to Vienna, our General Secretary Alison Brown, NGO representatives have successfully provided most pertinent and valuable inputs to the deliberations of the relevant UN Commission.

CEDAW

Argentina acceded to the Optional Protocol on 18 January 2005

Monaco acceded to the Convention on 18 March 2005, bringing the number of States parties to 180.

Burkina Faso acceded the Optional Protocol on 10 October 2005 and

South Africa acceded the Optional Protocol on 18 October 2005 - bring the total number to 74.

On <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

Women elected National Leaders Can this trend continue and grow?

Liberia's new President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan hailed the inauguration of Liberia's new President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first woman elected to lead an African nation.

"I also congratulate the people of Liberia who, through a peaceful and transparent electoral process, have given Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf an historic mandate to lead the nation towards a future of lasting peace and stability," Mr. Annan said in a message on the inauguration, which was held in Monrovia with numerous dignitaries in attendance, including the UN Deputy Secretary-General.

Peace process

The establishment of a democratically elected Government in Liberia culminates the peace process envisaged in the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 18 August 2003. During this period, the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia (<http://www.unmil.org/>) supported national efforts to achieve the transition to democracy by providing a secure environment, disarming more than 100,000 ex-combatants, facilitating the return of tens of thousands of displaced persons and refugees, and helping organize the recent free and fair elections.

Sirleaf said in her acceptance speech she would end the period of corrupt, male-dominated rule in war-plagued Liberia, and she called on women across Africa to help govern their countries.

16 January 2006, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=17166&Cr=Liberia&Cr1=>

Michelle Bachelet, Chile

Michelle Bachelet, a Socialist, a doctor and a former political prisoner and exile, on Sunday became the first woman to be elected President of Chile, decisively defeating Sebastián Piñera, a conservative billionaire businessman. With the count nearly complete, Ms Bachelet, the candidate of a left-centre coalition led by Socialists and Christian Democrats, had 53.5 percent of the vote. That assured another

four years in power for the coalition, which has governed Chile without interruption since Gen. Augusto Pinochet was forced to step down in 1990.

Ms Bachelet, who will be sworn in on March 11, is not the first woman to be elected president of a country in Latin America. Three widows of prominent political figures have preceded her: Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua, Mireya Moscoso in Panama and Janet Jagan in Guyana.

María Estela Perón in Argentina succeeded her husband upon his death; Lidia Gueiler in Bolivia came to power as the result of a coup.

Read more on <http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/new.htm#topnews>

Female members of Parliament on 16.1 percent

Worldwide, the number of female members of parliament reached a high of 6,960 or 16.1 percent in 2005, according to the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union. A look at some of the most significant political gains for women this past year:

* **Germany** - Angela Merkel became Germany's first female Chancellor. The former scientist, who heads the conservative Christian Democratic Union, is also the country's first leader to grow up in the former East Germany.

* **Liberia** - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won a runoff election in November to become Liberia's next leader, as well as the first elected female President in Africa.

* **Chile** - Michelle Bachelet, a Socialist, a doctor and a former political prisoner and exile, became the first woman to be elected President of Chile

* **Afghanistan** - Afghan women increased their voice in national politics when 68 female candidates won seats in the 249-member legislature. A quarter of the seats were reserved for women.

* **Saudi Arabia** - Lama al-Sulaiman and Nashwa Taher won the election to the Chamber of Commerce board in Jiddah.

* **Iraq** - Women are guaranteed basic legal rights, such as voting and property ownership, under the country's new constitution. While its exact composition is still being determined, at least 25 percent of the new four-year Iraqi parliament elected has been set aside for female lawmakers.

* **Japan** - The Japanese government plans to submit a bill to parliament in January that would allow the female child of a monarch to ascend the throne.

See also <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/01/03/ap/world/mainD8ET6NMO0.shtml>

Are women really advancing?

In Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has set them back, while in India, pregnant women so prefer boys they abort half a million females a year. Yet Monday, Liberia inaugurated Africa's first woman president, while on Sunday, Chile elected the first woman leader in Latin America who didn't rise to power on her husband's reputation.

Mixed progress

In richer nations, too, the report card on women's progress is mixed.

Germany elected its first female chancellor last year, and Norway has started a bold experiment to require the top 500 private companies to have 40 percent of their governing boards be women over the next two years. This quota system, designed to break a corporate "glass ceiling", is being tried in a Nordic country where 16 percent of company directors are already women, and a third of parliamentary members and about half of the cabinet are female.

But in Britain, which saw a powerful female prime minister during the 1980s, a report by the nation's Equal Opportunities Commission says gender equality in public life is "decades away". Only about 10 percent of senior positions in large companies and law enforcement are held by women, while the pace for women in Parliament is so slow that equality may take a couple of centuries. About 20 percent of MPs are women. Progress for women in US politics has been similarly slow.

High cost of day care

In Britain, as in America, there's a recognition that discrimination plays less of a role in women's progress in public life as more women tip the balance in favour of motherhood over careers in what's called "choice feminism". These "choices", however, are often dictated by the high cost of day care or its unavailability.

In Japan, workplace discrimination against women still remains strong, despite a 1985 law against it. But now that nation, with its low birth rate, faces a labour shortage as it ages rapidly, and the government is pushing new measures to encourage mothers to return to work after childbirth (more

than two-thirds don't). The new measures would grant more work flexibility for such returning workers, improve day care, and support women entrepreneurs. (Japan is also moving to allow a female monarch because no male heir to the throne has been born for 40 years.)

The Arab world has only recently begun to recognize the untapped potential of women as leaders. Iraq's new Constitution required every third candidate in the recent election to be a woman and that its parliament be 25 percent female. But the charter also gives a primary role to Islam in writing new laws and the right for religious sects to run "family courts" deciding such issues as child custody.

Progress in unexpected places, but equality?

By many measures, from politics to poverty, women still have a long way to go toward equality and upliftment. The world last put a big spotlight on women's progress at the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in China. More than a decade later, that progress shows up in unexpected places, such as the elections in Liberia and Chile. Those elections are worth celebrating, but they should also refocus efforts in areas where women aren't breaking through traditional barriers.

The Monitor, January 17, 2006 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0117/p08s02-comv.html>

CODEPINK : Women for Peace

Women's Anti-War Petition circles the Globe

Eminent female writers, artists, lawmakers and social activists in the United States are reaching out to women leaders across the world in an attempt to forge a global alliance against the US-led war in Iraq. A US-based women's group has launched a global campaign to gather 100,000 signatures by March 8, International Women's Day, when they will be delivered to the White House and US embassies around the world. "We are unleashing a global chorus of women's voices shouting, 'Enough!'" said Medea Benjamin, cofounder of CODEPINK: Women for Peace, a California-based rights advocacy group that has spearheaded the global women's campaign, called "Women Say No to War".

Benjamin says that more than 200 high-profile women from various walks of life endorsed the campaign even before it was formally launched earlier this month. The signatories include popular film stars like Susan Sarandon, the playwright Eve Ensler and comedian Margaret Cho, and award-winning authors such as Alice Walkers, Anne Lamott, Maxine Hong Kingston and Barbara Ehrenreich.

A shift in strategy?

Urging a shift in the US strategy in Iraq "from a military model to a conflict resolution model", the organisers say they want to see a withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq, with full representation of women in the peacemaking process in that country. With the launch of **Women Say No To War Campaign**, women around the world are asked to sign on to the [Women's Call for Peace](http://www.womensaynotowar.org/article.php?id=645).
Petition on <http://www.womensaynotowar.org/article.php?id=645>

UN continues to be under threat

UN Bodies Survive US Funding Threats

The United States, a major funder of the United Nations and its myriad agencies, has a long standing notoriety for exercising its financial clout to threaten UN bodies refusing to play ball with Washington.

UNESCO

Back in 1984, the US withdrew from the Paris-based U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), citing disagreement over its management, and also opposing a proposed plan for the creation of a new international information order.

But despite the sharp cut, UNESCO continued to survive -- minus the United States. In 2003, however, Washington returned to the fold, arguing it could live with the then new management.

UN Budget - Compromise

Last month, the administration of President George W. Bush threatened to hold up the U.N. budget for 2006-2007 until and unless member states agreed to US-inspired management reforms, including the appointment of a chief operating officer mandated to run the world body along the lines of a U.S. corporation.

Since the overwhelming majority was opposed to some of the proposed reforms, the U.N.'s administrative and budgetary committee eventually agreed on a US-proposed compromise: Secretary-General Kofi Annan was authorised to spend only 950 million dollars over a six-month period pending significant action on reforms, thereby emasculating the U.N.'s traditional biennium budget. "It is clear

that in six months we can assess progress on management reform issues and then decide how to address resource questions for the remainder of 2006," U.S. Ambassador Alejandro Wolff told delegates last month.

UN Population Fund

Meanwhile, the Bush administration has withheld a total of about 127 million dollars -- a sum duly appropriated by the U.S. Congress -- from the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA).

In 2002, Washington cut 34 million dollars; in 2003, 25 million dollars; and in 2004 and 2005, 34 million dollars each.

The cuts were prompted by a misconceived charge that UNFPA was supporting and promoting abortions in China -- a view strongly held by neo-conservatives and right wing Christian fundamentalists who are strong political supporters of Bush.

"UNFPA does not support abortion, neither in China nor anywhere else in the world," a UNFPA spokesman told IPS. "Our work in China aims at expanding access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including family planning, skilled birth attendance, emergency obstetric care and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS," he added.

UNFPA - more donors, more contributions

UNFPA executive director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid told reporters last week that more countries contributed to UNFPA in 2005 than in any year since its establishment in 1969: 171 donors compared to the 2004 record of 166.

Contributions to the UNFPA regular resources last year were also the highest ever, increasing to some 350 million dollars, from the previous year's level of 322 million dollars. The top six donors in 2005 were the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Britain, Japan and Denmark. "But every nation in Africa also pledged funds to the agency," Obaid said.

Thalif Deen, Jan. 9 (IPS) - on <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=31702>

WHO says 2005 Disasters not completely 'natural' Environmental Degradation and Climatic Change are Major Factors

Statement by World Health Organisation

The high death toll in 2005 from tsunamis, hurricanes, typhoons, mudslides, earthquakes, volcanoes, locusts and pandemics can not necessarily be blamed on "natural" disaster, according to the United Nations health agency which today pointed to a complex mix of human and natural factors that led to tragedy in those events. The UN World Health Organisation said that routine climate change, global warming influenced by human behaviour, socio-economic factors causing poorer people to live in risky areas, and inadequate disaster preparedness and education on the part of governments as well as the general population were part of that mix.

Disasters in 2005

The year 2005 saw the aftermath of the 26 December 2004 earthquake and tsunami waves in Asia, as well as hurricanes in central and north America, notably Katrina which triggered flooding in the United States city of New Orleans, and the 8 October earthquake in Pakistan and India. The year also saw famine after crops were destroyed by locusts in Niger and a volcano in El Salvador that was followed by Hurricane Stan.

From January to October 2005, over 97,000 people were killed in disasters globally, with some 88,000 of those deaths resulting from so-called natural disasters, according to the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), a WHO institution that operates a global disaster database in Belgium. Such deaths have been increasing since 1975.

Sparsely populated areas - less damage

However, natural phenomena do not always generate human disasters. Dr. Ugarte of PAHO noted that in 2005, several earthquakes that struck in South America were of a higher magnitude than the one that devastated northern Pakistan and parts of India in October, but these hit sparsely populated areas and therefore caused less damage. The same goes for several tsunamis in 2005 which were not deemed "disasters" because they didn't endanger anyone, Dr. Ugarte said.

Natural phenomena are likely to affect more people because the global population has increased to about 6.5 billion people and is projected to reach 9.1 billion people in 2050, according to UN figures.

Environmental degradation

Another important factor is environmental degradation, according to Marko Kocic, spokesperson for

WHO's Health Action in Crisis Department, who said natural events in Caribbean and Indian Ocean lands were amplified because of deforestation and stripping of vegetation from coastlines. Disasters are also a consequence of development and industrialization, he said. In Europe, experts believe that countries such as France and Germany are more adversely affected by floods today because major rivers, such as the Rhine, have been straightened to ease commercial traffic.

Climatic change

Global warming as well as routine, cyclical climate changes are causing a higher number of strong hurricanes in the Caribbean, meteorologists say. Add to that the increasing number of people living in substandard housing and on coastlines, as well as the destruction in a crisis of hospitals and other essential infrastructure and you have the potential for more devastating disasters than a few decades ago, WHO concludes. 4 January 2006 – on <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=17085&Cr=natural&Cr1=disaster>

Boys versus Girls

Female foeticide count at 10 million

A study has revealed that around 10 million female fetuses may have been aborted in India in the past two decades because of ultrasound sex screening and a traditional preference for boys. The report was published online in The Lancet.

Gender ratio

Researchers in Canada and India based their study on data from a national survey, conducted in 1.1 million Indian households in 1998, and on information about 1,33,738 births in 1997. They found that in cases where the preceding child was a girl, the gender ratio for a second birth was just 759 girls to 1,000 boys. And when the two previous children were girls, the ratio fell even further, to 719 girls to 1,000 boys. But when the preceding children were male, the gender ratio among successive births was about the same. Based on the natural sex ratio in other countries, around 13.6 to 13.8 million girls should have been born in India in 1997 — but the actual number was 13.1 million.

0.5 million missing girls yearly

“We conservatively estimate that prenatal sex determination and selective abortion accounts for the 0.5 million missing girls yearly,” said one of the report’s authors, Prabhat Jha of St Michael’s Hospital at the University of Toronto. “If this practice has been common for most of the past two decades since access to ultrasound became widespread, then a figure of 10 million missing female births would not be unreasonable,” he said. The study also pointed out that the “girl deficit” was far more prominent among educated women. The number of boys born as second children was twice as high among this group than among illiterate mothers.

Paris, Jan. 8 (AFP): http://www.telegraphindia.com/1060109/asp/nation/story_5698550.asp

Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

CONFERENCES - EVENTS - URLs - BOOKS - PRIZES

Conferences

- 9-20 January - Preparatory Committee for the 2006 United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the **Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons** in All Its Aspects, first meeting, New York
- 9-27 January - Committee on the **Rights of the Child**, forty-first session, **Geneva**
- 16-19 January - UN Children’s Fund (**UNICEF**), Executive Board, first regular session, New York .
- 16 January-3 February - **CEDAW**, thirty-fourth session, New York.
- 25-29 January - **World Economic Forum** (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland.
- 24-29 January - **World Social Forum** (WSF), Americas Forum, Caracas, Venezuela.
- 19-23 January - **World Social Forum**, (WSF), African Forum, Bamako, Mali

Note:

The WSF is an annual event that was started in 2001 as an alternative to the World Economic Forum, held in the Swiss town of Davos. While the economic forum is attended by members of the business and political elite who are widely viewed as supporting globalisation, the WSF mainly attracts civil society groups which vigorously oppose it. A broad range of issues, ranging from environmental

*degradation to the plight of indigenous peoples, is discussed at the forum.
Convenor for the IAW Commission Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, H el ene Sackstein.*

Quotas and Politics

A new book, "Women, *Quotas and Politics*", covers almost all major regions of the world: Latin America, Africa, the Arab world, South Asia, the Balkans, The Nordic countries and Europe, New Zealand, Australia and the U.S.A. The book also includes case studies on Iran, East Timor, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Argentina, Sweden, South Africa, Belgium and Rwanda, which in 2003 unexpectedly surpassed Sweden as the number one country in the world in terms of women's parliamentary representation, and on quotas in the IPU (<http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm>). It gives an overview of various types of quotas and it throws light over the troublesome implementation process.

Edited by Drude Dahlerup, University of Stockholm, Sweden, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Laws and Policies Affecting Reproductive Lives of Women

Women of the World reports are a global series detailing local laws, policies and statistical information as they relate to women's reproductive health and rights. The newest one, covering East and Southeast Asia, provides an extensive compilation of laws and policies that influence women's reproductive health in five countries of the region - China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. It offers advocates and policymakers a broad view of women's reproductive rights in these countries, and draws attention to specific issues that require legal and policy reform.

Information is to be found on several URLs starting with <http://www.reproductiverights.org/>

Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life

The Women's World Summit Foundation WWSF cordially invites you to submit nominations for the annual "Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life" Award, honouring creative and courageous women and women's organizations working to improve the quality of life in rural communities around the world.

Since inception in 1994 of the prize program, 303 Laureates have been honored with a cash donation of US\$ 500 each. Their names and profiles are posted on our website: <http://www.woman.ch>

Twenty Laureates in 2006

Twenty or more Laureates will again be selected in 2006 and given your experience, interest and perspective with regard to issues of development, human rights, micro-credit and empowerment of women, we would greatly appreciate your participation in this initiative and thank you in advance for sending us your candidates. Your nomination, using the guidelines attached, should arrive by mail by 1 March 2006.

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 (changed). 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>