

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

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

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

IAW NEWSLETTER - July 2005, nr. 6



Dear IAW members,

This newsletter starts and ends with poverty, that so many good people in this world are trying to reduce - with the UN and the Millennium Development Goals, with national good governance and on a personal basis.

The role of women is a crucial one in the fight against poverty. On one hand women belong, with their children, to the poorest of the poor. On the other hand, women themselves have still to be empowered to fight against the conditions causing poverty – the lack of food, water and good health systems; discrimination, violence, conflict situations and unjust laws.

Nevertheless, there are good practices – like in Burkina Faso, where the International Alliance will have the opportunity to hold its Board Meeting later this year.

**UN CALLS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AS A WAY TO DEFEAT POVERTY
ON WORLD POPULATION DAY**

New York, July 11 2005

The United Nations marked World Population Day today by deploring the discrimination and violence against women and girls that is still rampant around the world and demanding full gender equality as the way to win the battle against poverty, hunger, armed conflict and disease.

Kofi Annan

"When discrimination prevents true equality, the consequences are grave," Secretary-General Kofi Annan <" <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/sgsm9974.doc.htm> "> said in a message.

"Millions of girls are 'missing' from populations because parents preferred the birth of sons. More girls than boys are out of school, denied their right to an education and the keys to a better life, and impoverishing the communities in which they live.

"Poverty, gender discrimination and violence are fuelling the AIDS epidemic, with the number of women and adolescent girls newly infected rising in every region. And in some regions, alarmingly high levels of maternal mortality are claiming the lives of too many women and depriving children of their mothers' love and care," he added.

Women all over the world are mobilizing to secure their rights

"Despite these enormous challenges - indeed, because of them - women all over the world are mobilizing to secure their rights," he declared, citing important successes such as the focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in global debates on development, and new laws enacted in many countries advancing women's rights.

"On this World Population Day, let us resolve to empower women and girls by our commitment to gender equality," he concluded. "And let us remember that every society that wishes to overcome poverty, hunger, armed conflict and disease must draw fully on the talents and contribution of all of its members."

UNPFA, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid

The Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNPFA), Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, emphasized the many benefits of gender equality, including a higher quality of life for individual women and girls, and stronger families, communities and countries.

"On the other hand, the costs of maintaining inequality are also high and can be measured by broken bodies, shattered dreams and crushed spirits," she said, citing high rates of maternal death and disability because women's health is not made a political priority, and the continuation of harmful

practices that place women's lives in danger.

"For tens of millions of girls, child marriage and early childbearing mean an incomplete education, limited opportunities and serious health risks," she said. "But perhaps the highest cost of gender discrimination is widespread violence against women and girls, which remains one of the most pervasive and shameful human rights violations, compromising the personal security, liberty, dignity and well-being of millions of women and children worldwide. The world can do better. The solutions are well known and effective." See <" <http://www.unfpa.org> ">

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

For the first time in its history the UN held 'HEARINGS' as an interaction between Member States, representatives of civil society and the private sector on 23-24 June. It was an input to the preparatory process of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to be held from 14 to 16 September 2005 in New York.

The MDGs is a gigantic worldwide project, aiming at reducing the people living in extreme poverty by half from 2000 to 2015. During the Summit the first 5 years will be evaluated. NGOs all over the world, like IAW and Dutch Affiliate Vrouwenbelangen, had already sent in comments on the Report of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan: "In Larger Freedom: towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All".

The comments were put on the Internet and a compilation of their sometimes very valuable remarks was distributed during the Hearings.

Also the Cardoso report < <http://www.un-ngls.org/08twn.pdf> > on UN-Civil Society Relations: "A Third World Network Analysis", was an excellent one and was quoted frequently during the Hearings. One of the key findings of the Hearings were afterwards: **Participation of civil society** in the UN needed to be strengthened, including in the General Assembly. Meaningful participation of civil society in the proposed Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council needs to be assured. You will find the report "In Larger Freedom" on <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/contents.htm>

It certainly was a historic event, this debate at UN level with civil society. It was lively, with lots of applause from the observers at the tribune. Some delegates were very outspoken, for instance about ODA (official development assistance) and all those members states who were not keeping their commitment to devote 0.7 % GNI (Gross National Income) to ODA ("It's a scandal!").

It was sometimes touching such as when a delegate who was raped herself, was talking about violence against women and could not finish her last sentence. The man next to her was smiling about such behaviour and I heard the woman next to me hissing: "Take that grin of your face, man!" But another delegate (a man!) praised her for her bravery and talked about human rights and dignity. His speech received warm applause from the tribune. (IAW observer, Joke Sebus).

WOMEN AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

During CSW women's groups had already expressed their concern about the Report In Larger Freedom, because gender equality was more or less restricted to development and education. Women belong, with their children, to 70% of the people living on less than one dollar a day. Women are the poorest of the poor. And the empowerment of women is urgently needed to improve the MDGs. Shannon Kowalski of Family Care International said in a press release after the Hearings that none of the MDGs could be achieved in isolation, and their interrelation had been stressed in the panel on "Freedom from want". See

<http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2005/Civil_Society_Briefing_050624.doc.htm>

The Hearings were devoted to the review of Goals 1 to 7, which deal, respectively, with: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and ensuring environmental sustainability.

She defined gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, environmental sustainability, human rights and education as cross-cutting issues required for the achievement of the Millennium Goals.

Also emphasized in the debate was the impact of HIV/AIDS and the need to mobilize resources for the elimination of poverty. Participants stressed that governments must increase efforts towards implementing existing international agreements on relevant issues and commit now to meet the 0.7%

ODA target.

Linkage Caucus

The CSW statement of the Women Linkage Caucus had been used as a tool for lobbying. The result was that several speakers frequently mentioned women's issues. Women's voice was also heard clear and strong about the more controversial issues such as the difference of opinion of language on sexual and reproductive 'health' and sexual and reproductive 'rights'. One NGO delegate said: "How can a woman prevent being infected with HIV/AIDS, if she does not have sexual rights"?

After the Hearings the Linkage Caucus met again on Sunday to prepare the MDG Summit on 14-16 September. *The International Alliance of Women wishes them all a fruitful strategy!*
IAW Permanent Representative to the UN: Kay Fraleigh-Potts

Strengthening the United Nations

The Report In Larger Freedom has four chapters that were debated in four sessions: 1) Freedom from Want; 2) Freedom from Fear; 3) Freedom to live in Dignity and also 4) Strengthening the United Nations. The latter issue received many comments from the NGOs for specific reforms and support of the Secretary-General's proposals.

Security Council

The reform of the Security Council received the most of all NGO comments. This we found in the news.

17 July 2005 – Senior officials from **Brazil, Germany, India and Japan** – all countries that have expressed their desire to become permanent members of the Security Council – met today with Secretary-General Kofi Annan in New York ahead of key negotiations on the issue of United Nations reform.

Following the midday meeting, Mr. Annan's spokesman's office said the foreign ministers of the so-called "Group of Four" met to brief Mr. Annan "on the state of play and to reassure him that they are interested in broader UN reform, as well as Security Council reform."

The G-4 have introduced a proposal to increase the Council's membership from 15 to 25, by adding six permanent and four non-permanent members. None of the new permanent members would have the veto power wielded by the current five permanent members – **China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and the United States**.

For his part, Mr. Annan previously had presented **two models** for reforming the UN's most powerful security body.

A. The first provides for **six new permanent seats** – two each from Africa and Asia and one each from Europe and the Americas, with **no veto** being created. Three new two-year term non-permanent seats would be divided among the major regional areas.

B. The second model provides for **no new permanent seats** but creates a new category of eight four-year renewable-term seats and one new two-year non-permanent (and non-renewable) seat, divided among the major regional areas.

The General Assembly is currently conducting negotiations on this issue as part of a larger effort to overhaul the UN as proposed by the Secretary-General, who has voiced hope that world leaders meeting at a UN summit in September will act on the recommendations to render the world body more effective in meeting global challenges now and in the future.

NGOs strongly opposed Model A. One of the remarks: 'Per definition, permanent members risk no democratic elective repercussions for failures or misconduct as Council members, etc. etc.'.

In the meantime: the US does not seem interested in new models of the Security Council.

Human Rights Council

Lots of comments from NGOs, some with many details, advising how the new Council should be structured.

Why a Council? Paragraph 182 of 'In Larger Freedom' says: 'The Commission on Human Rights has been increasingly undermined by its declining credibility and professionalism'.

One NGO wrote: 'For years NGO's have been exposing the shortcomings of the UN's main human rights body, including its inability to address many situations of gross and systematic human rights violations around the world'.

Another noted: 'The Commission on Human Rights has not been the body we all wish it was in various

ways, but it is important to note that there have been considerably advances made in expanding the parameters of human rights discussion through the Commission, the Sub-commission and its special procedures, particularly in areas of violence against women, sexual rights, indigenous people and minority rights, the right to education, health, access to medicine and other areas of economic, social and cultural rights, and in the recent enhanced focus on non-state actors'.

The International Alliance of Women has supported the proposal for a Council of Human Rights.

Economic and Social Council - ECOSOC

In Larger Freedom, Paragraph 65: 'Over the time, the division of responsibilities between the three Councils (the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council) has become less and less balanced. The Trusteeship Council is now reduced to a purely formal existence and ECOSOC has been too often relegated to the margin of global economic and social governance'

Some NGOs complained that ECOSOC was hollowed out because financial institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the regional banks followed their own independent course and policy.

Mentioning paragraph 82, many NGOs called for the international financial institutions (IFIs) to be brought into the framework of the UN policy dialogue, so as to increase their accountability in the context of development and attainment of the MDGs and hold them to high standards of good governance, economic management and human rights.

Participants also called for **mandatory reporting by the IFIs to ECOSOC, as well as for a memorandum-of-understanding between the UN and the IFIs and WTO, which would hold ensure policy coherence and accountability.**

To guide the process, an Executive Committee with regionally balanced composition should be created.

A good ECOSOC website with the latest reports is on: <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/>

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

IAW Board Meeting 28 October – 3 November 2005

The Board has gratefully accepted the invitation extended by our member organisation Promo-Femmes, Développement-Solidarité. IAW President Rosy Weiss cordially invites all members of the Board and officers of the International Alliance of Women to attend the meeting of the Board, scheduled for 28 October to 3 November 2005 in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso.

During that week there will also be a Seminar with the major theme “**Women, Equality and Peace for a Sustainable Human Development**” and sub-themes:

- Violence against women and children during conflict period,
- Women contribution in conflict's resolution,
- Women role in development process
- Women, health of reproduction and HIV/AIDS.

For information as to the venue and hotel accommodation write to IAW Secretary Alison Brown, email <iawsec@liwest.at>

Women's anti-discrimination Committee takes up report of Burkina Faso

Acknowledge Country's impressive legislative advances

Burkina Faso's impressive advancements in asserting rights for women through the adoption of progressive legislation and policies was acknowledged, as were the daunting hurdles still facing the country in eliminating traditional and customary forms of discrimination, as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women met to discuss the situation of women in that country. The Committee's 23 members, acting in their personal capacity, monitor compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which Burkina Faso ratified in 1984.

Tremendous Progress

One expert, in congratulating Burkina Faso on the tremendous progress that had been made in the drive to advance women's rights, said that the Government had been courageous enough to legislate in many difficult areas, while some other African countries had not yet begun to do so. The authorities

had done a lot for women through the new legislation and, with a greater de facto implementation of those laws, Burkina Faso could lead the way for other African countries.

“We know you’re fighting religion and patriarchy and deeply seated prejudices but it’s necessary to start thinking outside the box“, another expert said.

Women still marginalized in rural areas

She pointed out how marginalized women were in rural areas. They had little say and polygamous marriages were the norm there. There were no laws covering violence against women and there was particularly harsh treatment of elderly women, who were sometimes characterized as witches or soul-eaters. The Government needed to find creative ways to empower women, she said.

Burkina Faso’s Minister for the Advancement of Women, Mariam Marie Gisèle Guigma, said that given its short experience with democracy -- only since 1991 -- Burkina Faso had achieved a lot, but it had not been long enough for the dramatic changes necessary.

The Government knew it could not do everything alone, so it was working closely with non-governmental organizations and civil society to meet the goals. It is not only women who are going to improve women’s situation, men have to be involved, she said.

More on: < <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/wom1516.doc.htm>>

Sent to us by IAW President Rosy Weiss

CEDAW, 33rd session 5-22 July 2004

Countries reporting: Benin, Korea, Gambia, Lebanon, Burkina Faso, Guyana, Ireland and Israel.

Reports on < <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/33sess.htm>>

Latest issue of the ONLINWOMEN BULLETIN which highlights Asia-Pacific women's involvement in politics on: www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org

IAW Affiliate Women's Electoral Lobby, NSW Australia, has a good electronic newsletter. It is called WEL-Informed and has independent political opinions. Website on <http://www.wel.org.au/>

Lenore Coltheart from WEL asked me to put in www.democrit.net

IAW convenor for *Civil & Political Rights/CEDAW*: *Lene Pind*. Resource members: *Patricia Giles, Pernille Bischoff, Leslie Larsen, Lillian Mushota, Chinta Akuretiagarna,*

USA, local initiatives to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty calling for reductions in the greenhouse gases that accelerate climate change, took effect in February. But the United States, which makes up four percent of the world's population and produces 22 percent of the world's greenhouse gases, did not ratify the treaty. (Nor did Australia.)

The George W. Bush administration opposes Kyoto because officials argue it would raise energy prices and kill five million U.S. jobs. The administration has also raised questions about the scientific legitimacy of climate change. The House of Representatives and Senate have also done little to stop the Earth from heating up, the mayors say. Tired of waiting for action from federal authorities, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, as the coalition is called, unanimously agreed last month to implement aspects of the protocol locally.

A total of 169 U.S. cities have now agreed to match or better the standards laid out in the Kyoto Protocol -- which requires industrialised nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by an average of six percent below 1990 levels by the year 2012 -- through actions such as restoring forests, reducing urban sprawl, developing alternative energy technologies, and educating the public.

By Niko Kyriakou. Read more on <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=29559>

Mailed to us by Ida Kurth, convenor of the IAW Environment Commission

Say no to Tobacco

Starting on World No Tobacco Day May 31st, this year the health professionals are targeted as actors in the control of the tobacco epidemic, on the basis of the Frame Convention on Tobacco Control, FCTC. Some examples of activities: be role models, advise on the benefits of cessation, discuss the risks of smoking in pregnancy, the exposure of non-smokers (often women and children) to tobacco smoke. Health professionals are also encouraged to act as leaders in campaigns for smoke-free public spaces and similar advocacy work.

WHO's TFI (Tobacco-free Initiative) has issued the brochure 'The Role of Health Professionals in Tobacco Control' with 3 posters highlighting this role.

For more information go to <www.who.int/tobacco/health_professionals>.

www.who.int/tobacco/codeofpractice and see also www.tobaccofreenurses.org
Sent to us by Gudrun Haupter, convenor of the IAW Health Commission.

**Author Suketu Mehta has set up a legal defense fund for Indian street kids.
He announced this at a CRY convention in New York. Excerpts from his speech.**

By now most of us in America are familiar with the happy news, of which we can all be proud: In this year's spelling bee, all four of the top finalists were of desi background. We might be forgiven for thinking that our children are the smartest in the world. Bill Gates ne bhi bola. The Microsoft founder went to India and said that Indians were the second smartest people in the world, after the Chinese. The Indians were almost as happy about this as the Chinese.

The same day that Anurag Kashyap won the spelling bee, two hundred million of his brothers and sisters in India went to bed hungry. That same day, one hundred million of them worked for up to 15 hours, in hellish carpet workshops, in tea stalls, in construction sites, instead of going to school. That same day, two million of them, younger than 15, sold their bodies to men for money.

I saw a lot of sadness when I went back to Bombay with my family a few years ago to live there. I watched people getting tortured in police stations. I heard other people describe how they set their neighbours on fire for the simple crime of being Muslim. I saw the systematic deterioration of a city that I love like no other. But you know what was the saddest sight in Bombay? Seeing kids on the street, taught to beg before they were taught to walk. It broke my goddamn heart.

One Bombay morning, walking on the road leading to the Strand book store, I saw a little family: A mother, with wild and ragged hair, walking with a baby boy, maybe a year old, fast asleep on her shoulder, leading by the hand another boy, maybe four or five, the boy rubbing his eyes with the fist of his free hand. He was walking the way children walk when they have been walking a long time; his legs jerking outward, his head nodding in a circle, to beat the monotony, to beat the tiredness. They were all barefoot. They might have been walking like this for hours. The mother said something gentle to the older boy, still clutching fast to her hand. I had walked past them, but then I had to stop. They came up to a stall, and, as I expected, the mother held out her hand. The stall owner did nothing, didn't acknowledge them. Automatically I found myself opening my wallet. I looked for a ten, then took out a fifty instead, and walked up very fast up to them, my insides raging, and thrust the fifty in her hand, "Yes, take this," and walked on without looking back, till I got to the air-conditioned bookstore and then stood in a corner and shut my eyes.

India is no longer a poor country; there's enough in the treasury to feed everyone. But all our progress - all our computer and jewellery billionaires, our spelling bee champions, our award-winning writers and Bollywood stars - they all mean nothing if we have malnutrition rates among our children that surpass those of Sub-Saharan Africa, and if one in six girls in India does n' t live to see her 15th birthday. We are the richest single ethnic community in North America, but all our wealth is shallow and worthless if we can't even take care of our children back home. We complain loudly when there are negative portrayals of India in the western media. We object to pictures of starving babies; and it is true, we've come a long way in abolishing the catastrophic famines of the 1950's. But we're not there yet, not by a long way.

The good news is that India is, in spite of its huge imperfections, a functioning democracy. Our country has made real and significant progress since independence. We haven't fallen apart, as everybody predicted – the Balkans got Balkanized, but India held fast. India is a democracy. It responds to pressure from interest groups who have votes or political power or money. Children have none of these. They must depend on the shifting mercies of adults.

So I have decided to set up, using the royalties from my book and in association with CRY, a legal defence fund for children. The fund will launch public interest litigation that will force the government to provide basic shelter, food, health care, and schooling to all children, as is mandated by the constitution and the UN treaty. India has the most activist Supreme Court in the world, a Court that's not afraid to hold the government's feet to the fire. A Court that virtually legislates through its

decisions. The Supreme Court holds the stick. Private charity is not enough. Move the government in the right direction, and we'll be helping millions of children instead of thousands.

People who have had experience with the Indian government have predicted: half of it will be eaten by corrupt officials. Yes, but that still leaves half that wouldn't have got to the children any other way. And there are good people within government too, bureaucrats, even politicians, who are waiting for this - waiting for their hand to be forced, inviting outside pressure.

So let's do it for the bacchas. Let's put the smile back on the faces of our children. Let's make every Indian child an Anurag Kashyap.

More of this moving story on: <http://www.cry.org/newsevents/CRYNews.asp?NID=328>

Article Source: Mid Day, Mumbai. Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

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.

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