

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

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

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER March nr. 3**



**Equal Rights**

*Dear IAW members,*

*March is a month with lots of news from CSW, the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York. More news of CSW will follow in April after the IAW members, who are attending CSW, have returned home.*

*In this newsletter a small compilation of news on women in the Gulf and Arab countries. Women who are still fighting for but also gradually getting support for voting rights.*

*From Rwanda: we are so proud of the women in politics there, who are bravely building up their country after a period of one of the worst massacres ever. Also news of a campaign for Control of Arms by three brave NGOs - IANSA, Amnesty and OXFAM - which will start a day before International Women's Day on March 8th. Also news of two IAW Affiliates - the League of Women's Rights of Greece and ADDEM in the Dominican Republic.*

*As usual you will find a list of events, conferences, interesting URLs etc. at the end.*

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

A **Summary of the Online Discussions** on the Selected Critical Areas of Concern of the BfA and other Emerging Issues is to be found on <http://www.un.org.Womenwatch/forums/review/IANWGEOnlineDiscussionReport.pdf>

The text of the **National Statements** are on <http://un.org/webcast/csw2005/statements.html>

And, if you can download Real Player, you can also see a video of the speaker, delivering her speech. Follow the instructions: To visit webcasts, click on "here" for free download on the site, etc. and don't forget to click on the symbol of the international women's movement at the UN, the dove.

**In a Media pool NGOs are writing their own News**

A great number of women's NGOs are giving their impression of CSW in English, Spanish, French etc. on <http://www.womensmediapool.org/>

Read the **Daily Newsletters** of CSW on <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/beijing/newspapers.asp>

With articles and colourful pictures the newsletters are giving a day by day impression of CSW.

Also: **Let's Chat!** The "B Plus Ten" cyber dialogues are a series of seven real time, online "global citizens chats" during the review of the Beijing Platform for Action, taking place at the United Nations in early March. By GEMSA, Gender and Media South Africa.

**Youth for Women's Rights back in Business**

Its Daybook, 23 February 2005 reads:

Between 5000-6000 people registered for Beijing 10 and 680 organizations sought accreditation.

Therefore, because of space and security concerns, each accredited organization will receive only two passes - which \*are\* transferable - to access Conference Room 2, which is where the official sessions will be held. All those accredited can be in the UN building, attending side events or other meetings - but organizations can only have two people at any one time in Conference Room 2.

Overflow rooms will be set up with AV to transmit the proceedings whenever possible. Since there are serious space restrictions in the main conference room, government delegations' access will also be severely limited, and if the room gets full, NGO access might be made more restrictive. Alternatively, if there are no space problems after the first days, UN Security may eliminate the pass system.

**Our bodies, Our health, Our rights**

The Youth for Women's Rights Caucus is an independent initiative, taken by the young people present and consists comprises MORE THAN 40 young people from all over the world. Members of the following organisations are present: CHOICE for youth and sexuality, Youth Coalition, YMCA Trinidad & Tobago, Demographic Costa Rican Association, DAWN, REPEM, NAPY, Lentswe la Rona, HELEM, REDLAC, Advocates for Youth and YouAct! Youth for Women's Rights was established during the Beijing +5 and continued during the UNECE in Geneva.

*This text is from the daybook of Thirza, Youth for Women's Rights, written on her first day at CSW.*

*You will find an interview of Thirza and Jostien on <http://www.righttodecide.org/index.html>*

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE GULF STATES**

### **A slow process with the occasional good news item**

#### **GCC Countries - Combating Violence and Discrimination against Women**

On 8-9 January 2005, under the patronage of the Supreme Council for Women in the Kingdom of Bahrain, a conference was held in Manama, Bahrain, on combating violence and discrimination against women in the Gulf Cooperation Councils (GCC) countries.

This conference was organized by Amnesty International in cooperation with the Bahrain Social Partnership for combating violence against women and attended by activists from civil society organizations in the GCC countries. This conference follows a research mission *on these topics* conducted in the summer of 2004 by Amnesty International.

#### **Special Legislation**

*The conference called upon the governments of the GCC countries to:*

- \* introduce special legislation criminalising violence against women;
- \* change the stereotypical image of women and to introduce human rights education to the curriculum at all levels;
- \* urge authorities in the GCC countries to implement international treaties on women's rights, such as CEDAW and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

#### **Executive Recommendation**

An official letter about the conference and a copy of all recommendations will be sent to the secretary general of the GCC with a request that it is sent to all GCC member countries.

For a full copy of the recommendations, see <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde040032005>

#### **IRAQ - The need for protective measures**

Women and girls in Iraq live in fear of violence. The current lack of security has forced many women out of public life and constitutes a major obstacle to the advancement of their rights. Since the 2003 war, armed groups have targeted and killed several female political leaders and women's rights activists. The report [Iraq: Decades of suffering - Now women deserve better](#) documents how women and girls in Iraq have been targeted directly, because they were women, and how they suffered disproportionately through decades of government repression and armed conflict.

#### **Women to be at the heart of the political decision-making process**

The report calls for women to be at the heart of the political decision-making process in Iraq, particularly when dealing with issues directly pertaining to women. It calls for women to be represented at all levels to protect women's interests. Women in the next government and the elected National Assembly must take the lead in ensuring that Iraqi legislation and future amendments are in total harmony with international standards.

Women's rights organizations in Iraq have repeatedly called for measures to be taken in order to stop violence and to end discrimination against women. In recent years, numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other bodies working for women's rights have been formed, including groups that focus on the protection of women from violence. Women's rights activists are often faced with threats and assaults from the families of the women they support.

Amnesty International, more on <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde>

#### **Women in Politics**

Although at the national level, only one woman, Nesreen Berwari, was appointed to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Iraqi interim elections law required that all parties who ran in the general elections include women on 25 percent of their candidates list. Once the votes are tallied, this may mean that one quarter of the 275 National Assembly seats will be granted to women. This is good

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news, especially compared to some of Iraq's neighbours, like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where women are banned from even voting in elections, let alone participating as candidates.

But because these Iraqi women were on party lists – mainly conservative religious parties – they will need to toe the party line, thus potentially prohibiting creativity and independence in the formation of the Iraqi government and constitution. In fact, no woman was appointed to the 24-member constitution drafting committee which wrote the current interim constitution. Women can only hope the next committee will be more inclusive.

#### **Local Politics**

Locally, however, things are better, especially in Baghdad, where more than 80 women serve on city, district and neighbourhood councils. Meanwhile, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have sprouted in the country, offering assistance to Iraq's female population. The U.S. State Department devoted \$10 million to educate Iraqi women on democracy and institution-building, but the fruits of these projects have yet to be seen. Also, the current occupation and security chaos has put a strain on such activities

*See for more* <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/politics/story/0,6903,1418627,00.html>

#### **SAUDI ARABIA - Saudi Arabia, Municipal Elections**

The Saudi Arabian municipal elections in 2005 involve 178 municipalities in Saudi Arabia and are scheduled to be held from 10 February to 21 April, 2005.

The first elections to be held in Saudi Arabia since the 1960s, the 2005 elections will be held in three stages: the first on 10 February around the capital city of Riyadh, the second in the east and south west on 3 March, and the third, in the north, on 21 April. The elections are part of the Saudi government's response to progressive movements calling for political reform. Male citizens over the age of 21 will vote for half of the members of their municipal councils.

#### **Women will not vote ...**

On 11 October 2004, Prince Naif bin Abd al-Aziz, the Saudi Interior Minister, announced to a Kuwaiti newspaper that women would not be able to run as candidates or vote in the elections: "I do not think that women's participation is possible." Elections officials noted logistical concerns, such as the lack of separate women's voting booths and the fact that many women do not have photo identification cards, as well as opposition from conservative religious traditionalists.

#### **... but there is hope in the future**

"This is a crippled democracy. If you half appointed and half elected, it's not fair. We can take it this time, but I hope it no longer exists in the future," voter Mohammed al-Homaidan, 45, told Reuters at one of several Riyadh public buildings that were converted into polling centres. "But it is a step toward a bigger step in future where society raises its voice and participates in decision making."

Engineer Saad al-Yahya, 31, said he hoped the vote would herald more elections that would include women, whose role in society is curtailed by tribal mores and Saudi Arabia's austere interpretation of Islam. "In the future, we will have elections to the Shura (advisory) council and women will vote. We need women to participate in these elections," he said.

*By Dominic Evans, more on* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Current\\_events](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Current_events)

#### **AFGHANISTAN - First Female Provincial Governor**

Former women's minister Habiba Sarabi is set to be appointed governor in Bamiyan province by President Hamid Karzai after being selected from an all-women short-list. There are natural difficulties because Bamiyan is a very mountainous place, with snow for a long time. There are also a wide-ranging number of problems facing the province - most famous for the giant statues of Buddha that were destroyed by the hard-line Taliban regime in 2001.

"Poverty is a major issue. I have to work on the reconstruction, to find some jobs for people," Ms Sarabi said.

During the Taliban regime, Ms Sarabi fled from the Afghan capital, Kabul, to Pakistan, where she lived in the city of Peshawar - although she often returned undercover. Following the US military action in 2001 that removed the Taliban, she was selected for Mr Karzai's cabinet. She instantly became a high-profile figure. Under the Taliban, women had been prevented from achieving high office.

*Read more on BBC World on* [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/4291343.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4291343.stm)

#### **Women's Voices Rise as RWANDA Reinvents Itself**

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KIGALI, Rwanda, Feb. 23 - The most remarkable thing about Rwanda's Parliament is not the war-damaged building that houses it, with its bullet holes and huge artillery gashes still visible a decade after the end of the fighting. It is inside the hilltop structure, from the spectator seats of the lower house, that one sees a most unusual sight for this part of the world: mixed in with all the dark-suited male legislators are many, many women - a greater percentage than in any other parliamentary body in the world. A decade after a killing frenzy left this tiny Central African country in ruins, Rwanda is reinventing itself in some surprising ways.

#### **Women in Parliament**

Women make up 48.8 percent of seats in the lower house of Parliament, a higher percentage than in the legislative bodies in countries like Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, known for their progressive policies. The rise of women stems in part from government initiatives aimed at propelling them to the upper ranks of politics. But their numbers do not necessarily add up to influence.

They are more a reflection of the demographics and disillusionment spawned by the killing spree that left 800,000 or more people dead, though some lawmakers are trying to use their new place in government to enhance the lot of women in what remains a deeply patriarchal land.

#### **Women Rebuilding the Country**

At the end of the ethnic warfare of the 1990s, women greatly outnumbered men - some estimate the ratio as 7 to 1 - a result of the wanton killing of so many men and the escape of so many others involved in the carnage. During the rebuilding of the country, then, women's anguished voices were difficult not to hear, and they became what was seen as a powerful and credible force for reconciliation.

More on <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/26/international/africa/26rwanda.html?pagewanted=2&th> Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu.

### **THE IMPACT OF GUNS ON WOMEN'S LIVES**

A new Control Arms campaign report, '**The Impact of Guns on Women's Lives**', will be launched in Johannesburg, South Africa on 7 March 2005, just in time for International Women's Day (8 March). We will mail the report to all IANSA members. It will also be available shortly to download on both the IANSA and the Control Arms websites.

#### **Women are paying a heavy price**

Women are paying a heavy price for the unregulated trade in small arms. Of the estimated 650 million small arms in the world today, nearly 60 percent are in the hands of private individuals – most of them men. The vast majority of those who make, sell, buy, own, use or misuse small arms are also men. Although most direct casualties are men, women suffer disproportionately from firearms violence, given that they are almost never the buyers, owners or users of such weapons.

The involvement of guns makes it far more likely that an attack will prove lethal. Research in the US shows that when guns are used in intimate partner violence, death is 12 times more likely to be the outcome than when other weapons are used. Women assaulted by their partners have a much better chance of survival if the attack is with a knife or other means, rather than a gun.

#### **Results of Campaigning**

Good news concerning Nepal: both India and the UK have suspended military aid to the Nepalese government. This was one of the demands made by Amnesty International after its Secretary General visited the country earlier this month. The US is also considering cutting the USD \$1.5 million of military aid it provides Nepal, where 11,000 people have been killed in 9 years of conflict between the government and Maoist armed groups. More information on <http://www.iansa.org>

#### **IANSA writes:**

Good communication and feedback are essential for the success of this action. Please let us know about your activities and subsequent outcomes by emailing [women@iansa.org](mailto:women@iansa.org) including photos. We can use this information and your ideas to inform the IANSA network through the weekly IANSA Update, and by putting information and photos of your activities on the website.

### **Gender Budgeting in India – ‘Looking at something radical’**

Avijit Ghosh reports: During a visit to a Karnataka village last year, Benita Sharma met a group of women Panchayat members. They had a problem with the way village finances had been spent the previous year. The women wished to use the money on water, fuel, sanitation, education and health but the men wanted to build a community hall. In the end, the men had the final word. But soon the building became a club of sorts where men cracked loud jokes and played cards.

This year, the women told the UN Development Fund for Women (Unifem) programme officer they were determined to have their own way but didn't know how. For them, the budget was a maze they got lost in. But after a quick refresher course on how the money was to be spent under different heads and how to get access to it, the women were ready to fight for their money and channelise it in their priority areas. "Now they are doing so with great skill," says Sharma.

### **Gender budgeting**

This was gender-budgeting in action at the grass root level. And many women's groups are hoping that when Union finance minister P. Chidambaram presents the annual budget on February 28, women's priorities will be reflected in a similar manner.

The concept of gender-budgeting is novel to India. But in many countries across the world, it is already in practice, in greater or lesser degree. Australia was the first country to develop a gender-sensitive budget. In 1984, its Federal government published a detailed audit of the budget's impact on women and girls. A paper prepared by CSR says 35 countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Tanzania and Sri Lanka, have taken steps to engender their national budget.

Read more on [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050227/asp/look/story\\_4407868.asp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050227/asp/look/story_4407868.asp)

*Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

## **HIV/AIDS – the continuing pandemic**

### **AIDS-Linked Death Data stir Political Storm in South Africa**

Johannesburg, Feb. 18 - In an implicit but devastating account of the havoc AIDS is causing here, South Africa's government reported Friday that annual deaths increased 57 percent from 1997 to 2003, with common AIDS-related diseases like tuberculosis and pneumonia fuelling much of the rise. The increase in mortality spanned all age groups, but was most pronounced among those between ages 15 and 49, where deaths more than doubled. Working-age adults are more sexually active than the rest of the population, and the opportunity for transmitting H.I.V. is greatest among members of this group.

#### **Women and the Youngest South Africans**

Two aspects of the report were especially notable. The death-certificate figures indicate the proportion of deaths among sexually active women is rising significantly compared with deaths among men - a ratio that strongly indicates a country's AIDS-related mortality rate. In 1997, 149 men ages 25 to 29 died for every 100 deaths among women; the comparable figure in 2003 was 77 male deaths for every 100 female deaths.

The report also suggested that AIDS was increasingly exacting a toll among the very youngest South Africans. In 1999, the report stated, disorders of the immune system emerged for the first time as one of the 10 leading causes of deaths of children under 15.

By Michael Wines, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/19/international/africa/19africa.html?th>

### **Aids is a big threat for women in Arab countries**

A conference on HIV/Aids among women in Arab countries has heard a call for more to be done to help this vulnerable group. Although incidence rates are still low compared to the rest of the world, health practitioners warned that this would not be the case in a year's time. Already the HIV/Aids rate among women in the region has increased. UNAids and the government of Jordan are sponsoring the first three-day conference in Amman.

UN officials estimate that there are more than half a million men and women living with HIV in this region. According to Dr Suman Mehta, UNAids Associate Director, was the prognosis for women and girls in the region infected with the disease not good. Dr Mehta told that infections among women were on the rise, although it was impossible to give accurate figures.

#### **A Stigma attached to Aids**

Reason is the discrimination and stigma attached to Aids in these countries. Throughout the Middle East, more than 90,000 new cases among men and women were reported last year alone and these are just the reported numbers. According to Dr Hind Khattab, a public health specialist from Egypt, was it time to move from concern to action to combat HIV/Aids before it claimed more lives. That might mean shaking up popular misconceptions about sexuality in this traditional, conservative area of the world. Dr Khattab and other health workers are calling on governments to provide proper sex education and HIV-prevention training in schools, and to integrate HIV-Aids counselling and treatment within more general health care and education. BBC News, 23-02-05

*IAW Convenor on Health, Gudrun Haupter <haupter@t-online.de>*

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## INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

### **Welcome, Congratulations and Thank you !!**

Reyna Cohen, President of ADDEM (La Alianza por los Derechos y el Desarrollo de la Mujer y la Familia) will accompany her husband, Leonardo, to Israel where he has been appointed Ambassador for the Dominican Republic. The former Secretary General of ADDEM, Ana Silvia Reynoso de Abud, has been appointed Ambassador to Italy. The new President, of ADDEM, taking Reyna's place, is Dr. Josefina Coen and the new Secretary General is Dr. Irma Nicacio. Thank you from the heart, dear Reyna and dear Ana Silvia, for your strong action for women in the Dominican Republic and for ADDEM. Welcome, Dr. Josefina Coen and Dr. Irma Nicacio. We send good wishes and congratulations to all four of you!

### **Greek League of Women's Rights**

In the Journal of the Greek League for Women's Rights we found in the English summary an article by Soula Panaretou, and we quote the following extract:

“The proposed draft Code for the exercise of the Medical Profession and Professional Ethics includes at least two articles which the League of Women's Rights considers as undermining lawfully established rights of women as regards legal and safe abortion and medically assisted reproduction. With regards to both these instances the proposed draft includes stipulations, providing that ‘the doctor can refuse to perform, pleading rules of principles of his morals or conscience’. Only one exception to this ruling is provided, and that is in the case of the abortion, if there is no unavoidable risk for severe and permanent damage to the health of the pregnant woman.

#### **League's comments:**

“That both abortion and medically assisted reproduction are lawful medical actions, interconnected with women's right to self-regulate their fertility and reproductive function. Free abortion is an internationally established right, an essential part of the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

Medically assisted reproduction increases the reproductive capacity of childless women or couples (amounting, on a world scale, to 15% of the total number of couples) assisting them in enjoying their right and desire to have children”. The article ends with:

“The League wishes to emphasize the importance of having units for medically assisted reproduction, clinics for abortion, family planning services etc. well organised and constituting reliable parts of the public health system, consequently operating under public control and with established rules”.

Other issues in the journal: the draft Constitution of the EU; Women's Position in Science; the state of Women's Rights in Turkey; and: Greek NGOs Declaration regarding prerequisites for Turkey's accession to the EU, signed by many NGOs.

### **IAW Shadow Report on Tobacco Control at CEDAW**

At the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women held in New York from 10 to 28 January 2005, New York, the International Alliance of Women submitted an NGO shadow report on Gender and Tobacco. Women's groups from Sri Lanka, Sweden, Spain, New Zealand, Germany, USA, France, and Switzerland were involved in preparation of this NGO report and networking has been strengthened. The tobacco control committee in Uruguay also translated the report into Spanish for use by the press.

#### **Passive smoking**

Countries reporting were Algeria, Croatia, Gabon, Italy, Lao, Paraguay, Samoa and Turkey. The report noted that even if women do not smoke, exposure to passive smoke has negative effects on family health. Rates of male smoking are high in Samoa at 58 percent, Turkey (50.9 percent) and Algeria (43.8 percent) and somewhat lower in Lao (41 percent), Croatia (34.1 percent), Italy (31.1 percent) and Paraguay (12 percent). The report also stated that the tobacco industry targets youth through the promotion of rock concerts, beauty pageants and school programs. Most alarming is the impact on tobacco use among youth and girls. For example, in Samoa, nearly 47 percent of youth use tobacco and in Croatia, 25 percent of girls 15 to 16 years old use tobacco. And although only 10.9 percent of Turkish women reported smoking in 1998, the rate among teen-age girls was higher at 14.8 percent.

All countries reporting to this CEDAW session have also signed the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control which has 168 signatories and 57 ratifications (March 1, 2005). The FCTC commits

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governments to support the rights to health as provided by the CEDAW, ICESCR and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The WHO convention went into force on February 27, 2005.  
*IAW Health Commission, Soon-Young Yoon*

## EVENTS - CONFERENCES - WEBSITES – REPORTS – SPECIAL DAYS

**Year of the Micro credit 2005 on** <http://www.yearofmicrocredit.org/>

Micro finance has proved its value in many countries, as a weapon against poverty and hunger. It really can change peoples' lives for the better - especially the lives of those who need it most."

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General

### Special Days

International Women's Day (8 March) To be found on websites worldwide!

World Day for Water (22 March) [http://www.unesco.org/water/water\\_celebrations/index.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/water/water_celebrations/index.shtml)

World Health Day (7 April) <http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2005/en/>

World No-Tobacco Day (31 May) <http://www.who.int/tobacco/communications/events/wntd/2005/en/>

World Environment Day (5 June) [http://www.unep.org/wed/2005/english/About\\_WED\\_2005/](http://www.unep.org/wed/2005/english/About_WED_2005/)

### Millennium Development Goals

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit: websites on <http://www.asiapropoor.net/>

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/> - [unmillenniumproject.org/press/index.htm](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/press/index.htm) -

<http://www.unescap.org/esid/index.asp>

### 2nd International Forum on Partnerships for Sustainable Development:

Advancing Implementation on Water and Energy (21-23 March 2005, Marrakesh, Morocco)

### Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

On 21 February-11 March 2005, Geneva <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/cerds66.htm>

**Strategic Alliances In Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice**, the Eleventh United Nations Congress. Hosted by the Government of Thailand, Bangkok, 18-25 April 2005.

Website [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime\\_cicp\\_congresses.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime_cicp_congresses.html)

### Wikipedia – the free encyclopedia

An interesting and very helpful website on [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

**Amnesty International** gives, in an extensive article called: “**No Turning Back**”, an overview of critical areas of concern like: Violence against Women worldwide, Women and Armed Conflict, Women and Health and Women's Human Rights. With recommendations at the end. The article is well worth copying to use it for quoting. On <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGIOR410022005>

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