

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

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

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales

IAW NEWSLETTER - SPECIAL IWD Edition - March 2007



Dear IAW members,

This is a SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY newsletter. A day for the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN, focussing on ending impunity for violence against women and girls. With messages of all major UN agencies and departments, but also with statements, reports, side events and actions from NGO's all over the world.

For a CSW-report of the International Alliance of Women, please have a look in a week or so at the IAW website: www.womenalliance.org. Note the correct URL because some people still have the old one ending in .com but that has gone into cyberspace!.

In 1908 women marched in New York demanding shorter working hours, better pay and voting rights. International Women's Day was subsequently named and on 8 March women around the world use this as a specific day to protest for women's rights and to celebrate the gains won for women.

Equal Pay Blues

Patsy Brown was a factory girl,
She worked for a wage in a Lancashire mill,
Turned a wheel from right to left,
For half the wage of her brother Jeff.

Keep that wheel-a-turning,
Keep that wheel-a-turning,
Keep that wheel-a-turning,
If you want to get your equal pay.

Where are Women 100 years later?

Inter-Parliamentary Union

Women now made up an all-time high of almost 17 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide, Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), said as he launched the latest world statistics on women in Parliament and the role of women leaders.

The number of female Heads of Government had more than doubled, with six of them having been elected last year, and 35 out of 262 officers presiding over Parliaments were women.

Gulf States and the Middle East

Representation of women in the Gulf States and the Middle East in general had grown. In the United Arab Emirates, women had contested elections and voted for the first time in that country's history. Nine women had entered Parliament, taking 22.5 per cent of the seats.

Costa Rica - Rwanda - Sweden

The Nordic countries continued to elect a high number of women parliamentarians, and their regional average had increased to 40.8 per cent. Surprisingly, however, Latin America was the leading region in that respect, with women having taken further strides forward in some 20 elections held last year. The region now ranked first, just ahead of Europe. Women comprised 38.6 per cent of parliamentarian in Costa Rica, ranking third after Rwanda and Sweden.

For real equality we have to wait till 2077!

Progress made in 2006 had been slower than that of the preceding year Johnsson said, adding: "If we are aiming for equality in Parliament -- roughly 50 per cent men and 50 per cent women -- then we will wait until the year 2077 to celebrate that event."

It was also discouraging that countries emerging from conflict had shown a decrease in the number of women parliamentarians, a trend that could be due to a failure to establish quota systems in such countries as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti.

More on <http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm>

Women in Science

Worldwide, women make up only 27 per cent of all researchers, and glaring disparities can be seen on different continents, with women scientists comprising, of the total, 46 per cent in South America, 29 per cent in Africa and 15 per cent in Asia, according to a 2006 UNESCO study.

The European Commission reports that in Europe, 32 per cent of state laboratories and 18 per cent of private ones are staffed by women.

Figures for the next generation are also not promising for women scientists. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has noted a steep drop in the number of girls studying science and technology, particularly in the United States, Canada and France.

This year's recipients of UNESCO-L'Oréal awards, who join more than 40 other women scientists from over 20 countries who have received the honour, are:

- ∞ Ameenah Gurib-Fakim of Mauritius for her exploration and analysis of plants from her country in paving the way for their use as safe and effective alternatives to existing commercial medicines;
- ∞ Ligia Gargallo of Chile for her work helping drug designers envisage how new compounds will interact with the body's enzymes;
- ∞ Mildred Dresselhaus of the United States for her research on solid state materials, including carbon nanotubes;
- ∞ Margaret Brimble of New Zealand for her contribution to synthesizing complex natural products, especially shellfish toxins; and
- ∞ Tatiana Birshtein of Russia for her efforts to understanding the shapes, sizes and motions of large molecules.

In a related development, 15 UNESCO-L'Oréal International Fellowships were given out in Paris to post-doctoral students. Awarded annually, these fellowships are intended to support women's efforts in science, encourage progress in the field and promote societies' development globally.

Paris, 22 February 2007.

International Women's Day with spotlight on gender-based violence

8 March 2007 – From the violence-scarred cities of Afghanistan to the rape-wracked lands of Darfur, from the teeming Palestinian refugee camps of Gaza to the lofty halls of its Headquarters in New York, the United Nations system marked [International Women's Day](#) with the focus on ending impunity for violence against women and girls.

"Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [said](#) in a message, calling on Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to work for a transformation in relations between women and men, at all levels of society.

The United Nations must be at the forefront of those endeavours," he added, stressing also that in almost all countries, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions, while their work continues to be undervalued, underpaid or not paid at all.

Among the many special events marking the day was a panel discussion at Headquarters addressed by Mr. Ban and other senior UN officials.

Messages from all major UN agencies and departments

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHRC) Louise Arbour [called](#) violence against

women a scourge “of pandemic proportion... rightly termed the most common but least punished crime in the world.”

In Sudan’s Darfur region, where nearly four years of fighting between the Government, allied militias and rebels seeking greater autonomy has already killed over 200,000 people and uprooted 2.5 million more amid charges of massacres and mass rape, the UN refugee agency highlighted its work in providing counselling and psycho-social support at centres for internally displaced women and refugees. To date, some 80,000 women have benefited from the service provided by the **UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)**, contributing to a gradual change in the perception amongst displaced men and women about sexual violence in conflict.

“This centre is vital for us,” one beneficiary, Fatma, said at a camp in West Darfur. “Some people may think that we just need food and water to survive. But what we are doing here is also a very important kind of assistance.”

By its very nature, UNHCR’s observation of the day was spread widely across the world, from the many camps where it hosts those uprooted from their homes to its headquarters in Geneva, where High Commissioner António Guterres [announced](#) that his agency was joining nine sister UN agencies to take concerted action against sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

“I hope these actions will make it absolutely clear that prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence is a UNHCR priority,” he said of **The Stop Rape Now campaign** co-launched by the agency in Nairobi, Geneva and New York.

“Today we not only commemorate but also celebrate your spirit,” **UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)** Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd [said](#) in a message to Palestinian women. “It is your strength, your courage and your steadfastness that have kept hope alive in Palestine.”

In another troubled land, hundreds of women joined **UNAMA, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan** at events held across Afghanistan. In Kabul, the capital, women streamed into the Women’s Garden to mark the day with a UN fair, a film show and a photo exhibition highlighting the daily realities of the lives of Afghanistan’s women and girls. In the southern city of Kandahar the mission screened a film on the life of Afghan women’s advocate Safia Ama Jan who was murdered last year for her tireless efforts.

UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid [noted](#) that while progress has been made in the adoption of laws, much greater action is needed to ensure laws are enforced. “Everyone should understand that violence against women and girls is unacceptable and will no longer be tolerated,” she said.

UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer [stressed](#) that all the progress made in advancing women’s rights could be destroyed by continuing violence against women, while UN World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Margaret Chan [noted](#) that intimate partner violence was the most common form of abuse, much more so than assault or rape by strangers or acquaintances.

UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Kemal Dervis [noted](#) that at least one of every three women faces some form of violence in her lifetime, regardless of culture, religion, socio-economic class or education, while **UN World Food Programme (WFP)** Deputy Executive Director Sheila Sisulu [stressed](#) how lack of adequate food often creates situations in which women and girls are vulnerable to all forms of violence.

The **UN International Labour Organization (ILO)** [highlighted](#) the persistent gap in status, job security, wages and education between women and men that contributes to the “feminization of working poverty”.

DESPITE ALL THE WORK TO PROGRESS WOMEN’S RIGHTS ZOE WILLIAMS OF THE GUARDIAN SAYS:

A day that once stood for women's liberties has been hijacked by yoga, spices and animals in art

Let's start by running through how different organisations have chosen to mark tomorrow's International Women's Day 2007. The Greater London authority had an event last weekend with bike workshops, self-defence classes, some kind of spice-centric cookery display, and a fashion show by Kulture2Couture, which covers all bases by designing clothes for women, and hinting at "urban attitude" with its poor spelling.

Tomorrow in Westminster, Hilary Benn chairs a panel of global experts addressing Women's Rights in the Age of Insecurity and two charity heavyweights - Mary Wandia of ActionAid and Grace Mukasa of VSO - discuss the HIV crisis. Meanwhile, in a talk entitled Animals in Art, "successful female artist Sally Matthews" discusses the role of animals in art. Hazel Blears sent out a release reminding us that David Cameron pretends to be pro-women, yet his last 13 candidate selections have been male. And the Ayr Bonnie Lassies promise a "fun-filled day of dancing from around the world, yoga, storytelling and IT". I want to take the piss, but I don't know where to start.

Let's take it as read that the feminist movement has traditionally covered three issues: women in public life (access to the legislature, education and politics); women in private (health, sexual and other domestic violence); and the point of intersection between these two worlds (rape conviction rates, provision for victims of domestic violence, abortion rights, and government decisions about other health matters).

The primacy of each issue depends on the treatment of women in a country. Where women are fighting just to keep or get the vote, or retain access to education in the face of bigotry under, say, the Taliban, then access to abortion services will naturally take second place. This isn't a relativistic issue - abortion rights are as important in Afghanistan as in Accrington. It's just a pragmatic point that everything filters down from one's democratic rights.

In other words, I am not saying that there should be total homogeneity in what we discuss on women's day. Even though the prominence of female MPs in the Conservative party might seem trivial to the head of an NGO fresh from Sharia-ordered stonings in Nigeria, that does not mean it is not worth highlighting. The threat to abortion rights in America is not as great a violation of women's liberties as deaths from unsafe abortion in sub-Saharan Africa, but protesting about the first injustice is the way to prevent its deterioration to the level of the second.

What is not relevant is fun-packed dancing from around the world, spice workshops and fashion shows. Fashion is to international women's rights as Agassi kitchen utensils are to gay rights. Yes, some women are interested in fashion; some gay men own more than one brightly coloured fish slice. But it is an outrage against people who take liberties seriously - who embody the core of feminism by interpreting it as a war that hasn't been won until it's been won for all women - to trivialise these matters.

It could not matter less if yoga is good for you, or women have a connection with the moon, or there's some very interesting storytelling going on in Ayr. What matters enormously is the impact on the enterprise as a whole when it expands to cover animals in art. It's this kind of hijacking of meaningful collective action that did for the women's movement in the first place, that made today's young women think you could believe in equal pay as a regular person, but as soon as you called yourself a feminist you had to stop shaving your legs and start eating pulses.

Tell stories and dance as much as you will - but not on International Women's Day. Make your own day of celebrations. Call it Gullible Idiots Unite. Have it in April.

[The Guardian, 7 March 2007 mszoewilliams@ntlworld.com](mailto:mszoewilliams@ntlworld.com)

REPORTS - HANDBOOKS - PUBLICATIONS

UN-NGLS Launches New Publication: The Unfinished Story of Women and the United Nations
To help commemorate International Women's Day, [UN-NGLS](#) is pleased to announce its latest publication in the Development Dossier series, The Unfinished Story of Women and the United

Nations, which covers more than eighty-five years of history between women and inter-governmental organizations. Unrecorded by history and untold by the media, this book recalls the success story of women and the League of Nations and describes the unfolding history of women at the United Nations for the advancement and empowerment of women, especially in the 30 years since the [First UN World Conference on Women in 1975 in Mexico City](#) and up to the [ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005](#).

It is available online (www.un-ncls.org/pdf/UnfinishedStory.pdf).

See also the [Online Focus archive](#) on the UN-NGLS website on eliminating violence against women.

Panel Discussion: How to Strengthen Gender Architecture

On 26 February, a panel discussion on United Nations Reform: How to Strengthen Gender Architecture? was held as a side event of the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The event was co-sponsored by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UN-NGLS, the Women's Environment and Development Organizations (WEDO) and the Center for Women's Global Leadership. A report of the panel discussion will be available soon on the [NGLS website](#).

GA Informal Thematic Debate: Promotion of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

From 6-7 March 2007, the General Assembly held an informal thematic debate on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, with the [President of the General Assembly, Haya Rashed Al Khalifa](#), and [UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) opening the two-day debate. During the [2005 World Summit](#), world leaders affirmed their commitment to [promote gender equality and the empowerment of women](#) as an integral aspect of reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)). The two panel discussions will focus on women in decision making and the empowerment of women including through microfinance. Further information is available [online](#).

Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

Yakin Erturk, [Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences](#), has released her report: Intersections between culture and violence against women (A/HRC/4/34). Section I of the report is an introduction, section II summarizes the Special Rapporteur's activities in 2006 and section III examines the intersections of culture and violence against women and contains the Rapporteur's conclusions.

The report addresses the dominant culture-based paradigms that justify or explain the violations of women's rights. In order to successfully uphold universally agreed values, in particular the principle that no custom, tradition or religious consideration can be invoked to justify violence against women, the report identifies the myths around cultural discourses and outlines general guidelines for an effective strategy to counter and transform culture-based discourses, which constitute one of the major obstacles to the implementation of women's rights. The report is available [online](#).

UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women

The year 2007 marks the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which is managed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women ([UNIFEM](#)). In establishing the Trust Fund, the General Assembly (resolution 50/166 in 1996) highlighted eliminating violence against women as critical to accelerating the implementation of the [1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#).

The Trust Fund is the only multilateral grant-making mechanism that supports local, national and regional efforts to combat violence. Since it began operations in 1997, the Trust Fund has distributed nearly US\$13 million to 226 innovative programmes to address violence against women in more than 100 countries, including projects that conduct public education and awareness campaigns, build coalitions, involve law-enforcement, judicial and government agencies, train educators, healthcare personnel and police officials to respond to and prevent violence. Many projects strive to alter community attitudes and involve men as allies. Further information is available [online](#).

UNFPA: Ending Violence Against Women

The United Nations Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)) has launched a new publication entitled Ending Violence Against Women: Programming for Prevention, Protection and Care.

The handbook, intended primarily for development practitioners, provides practical points to consider when designing and implementing projects addressing violence against women. It is a collection of good practices drawn from ten case studies described in a complementary volume [Programming to Address Violence Against Women](#). The approaches are based on an appreciation of culture and the role it plays in this issue.

Ending Violence Against Women is available [online](#). Also available on the UNFPA website is an [Online Exhibition: Ending Violence Against Women](#), which includes cultural sensitive programming approaches, case studies and other related resources.

ILO--Celebrating working women: Breaking boundaries, driving change

In keeping with the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) commitment to gender equality and the improvement of working conditions for women, the ILO celebrates [International Women's Day](#) each year by hosting a roundtable discussion highlighting the role and/or achievements of women in a particular field of work.

ILO will also issue a new study entitled [Global Employment Trends for Women, Brief 2007](#), which provides a concise overview of the state of women in labour markets worldwide, including new data on the number of women who are in work, the number who are unemployed and what it calls the feminisation of working poverty. The study also analyzes the evolution of female participation in labour markets over the past decade. It will be available online.

UNESCO: Women Peacemakers

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) hosted an international conference on 8 March to bring together women who contribute, through their work, to the promotion of peace around the world. In order to face the most complex crises the world has ever known, and because conflicts have direct consequences on women, it is fundamental that women participate fully and equally in the prevention of conflicts, in peacebuilding processes and in the consolidation of peace. Further information is available [online](#).

Education

Also on International Women's Day, educators worldwide are demanding that governments act to halt violence that endangers women's lives, violates their rights, harms their families and poses an affront to humanity and international law. According to Education International (EI), the federation of organizations representing over 30 million teachers and other education workers, women around the world continue to face systemic discrimination and inequality that restricts their choices, limits their ability to act and undercuts their enormous potential to contribute to peace and development.

Education International and its member organizations are urging governments to pursue the [Education for All](#) goals and [Millennium Development Goals](#) related to education, by: guaranteeing the fundamental right to education to all girls worldwide; strengthening opportunities for post-primary education for girls while meeting commitments to universal primary education; making schools girl-friendly; recruiting female teachers from the communities in areas where the school enrolment of girls is low due to cultural factors and traditional practices that pose impediments to education; implementing international conventions prohibiting child labour and setting minimum age for labour; combating violence against girls and women; taking measures to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and providing sexual health education and access to quality public services by adolescents, poor women and disadvantaged groups. More information is available [online](#).

WEDO: Women and UN Reform

The Women's Environment and Development Organization ([WEDO](#)) has produced an advocacy and activist resource fact sheet on gender equality and UN Reform. Using clear and simple language, *UN Reform: What is at Stake for Women?* outlines the UN reform process and how it affects women's lives. It provides an overview of women's work throughout the process, key demands met and steps to take to get involved and help make change.

UN Reform: What is at Stake for Women is available [online](#).

WUNRN

The Women's UN Report Program & Network (WUNRN) is a non-governmental organization that strives to implement the conclusions and recommendations of the United Nations Study on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Status of Women From the Viewpoint of Religion and Traditions ([E/CN.4/2002/73/Add.2](#)). The study provides a universal and comprehensive UN approach to intolerance and discrimination against women and girls based on religion and traditions.

The WUNRN programme represents multi sectoral linkages between governments, the United Nations, civil society, NGOs, academia, religions, media, foundations and more. WUNRN is an information resource and an advocacy programme on the human rights, empowerment, and oppression of women and girls around the world.

The WUNRN ListServe is considered one of the most active and expansive Gender ListServes in the world. To sign up, send an email request to WUNRN at mosie@infionline.net. Further information is available [online](#).

Women's International Perspective

The Women's International Perspective, WIPSM, a news and opinion website that aims to help set a new standard in online news reporting, will be launched on 8 March, bringing together women writers from around the world who provide comprehensive news coverage on global issues and events.

WIPSM aims to address the under-representation of women in media and to offer breaking news stories written from the woman's perspective in order to help enhance global dialogue and bring divergent cultures, opinions, and ideas together.

The WIPSM front page features news headlines, a unique female byline portal of regional publications from around the globe, and links to The WIPSM writer contributions. Editorials are written by both established and emerging writers.

iKNOW Politics

The first virtual network linking women in politics throughout the world was launched on 27 February 2007 at the United Nations: the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics). The initiative was founded in partnership by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

The global platform is specifically designed to promote gender-sensitive governance and advance the role and number of women in political and public life. It connects parliamentarians, representatives, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, academia and practitioners across borders, generations and faiths, equipping them with the materials, expertise and best practices to make their political mark.

Drawing on a database of over 100 experts on women in politics, iKNOW Politics allows users to access an online library with more than 400 reports, handbooks and training materials in English, French and Spanish from leading international agencies, research institutions, academia and civil society groups. More information is available [online](#).

Note

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

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

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