

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

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

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER September 2007, no. 10**



**Equal Rights**

*Dear members,*

*A newsletter full of news around the world, most of it from the United Nations. A report on Gender Equality Architecture Reform at the UN; Rights of Indigenous People; the Human Rights Council; UNICEF with child deaths worldwide, which went down a bit but also with some scandalous figures; and corruption by bent leaders, stealing much needed money from their countries.*

*The UN, which has to deal with it all and with a lot more, opened this month the 62nd session of the General Assembly.*

*Also: climate change, cluster bombs, what are fatwas, undernourished children in India. As usual, at the end of this newsletter you will find some interesting reports, books, and nominations. Amidst it all the International Alliance of Women is steadily going on planning Congress!*

## **INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN**

The President of the All-India's Women Conference, Manorama Bawa, writes us that the **last date of registration for Congress has been extended to 30th September**. Registration forms are to be found on [www.womenalliance.org](http://www.womenalliance.org) and <http://www.aiwc.org/>

This is your last chance to join us in New Delhi! Important decisions on the future of the Alliance are to be made. For those of you planning to go to India for the first time, prepare for a unique experience!

### **Human Rights Council**

Just before mailing this newsletter we received an excellent report from H el ene Sackstein, IAW representative at the Human Rights Council. We can only quote here a few sentences.

For the latest news, please go to [http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/docs/newsletter\\_60th\\_n2\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/docs/newsletter_60th_n2_en.pdf)

#### **September, the road forward and terminology**

This Concept Note suggests that a half day session be held in September on gender integration, and that a proper session on human rights of women be held annually at future sessions of the Council, beginning possibly in March/April or June of 2008.

*H el ene Sackstein: It is important to note the distinction between analysis of gender integration into the HRC and substantive work on human rights of women.*

*In gender integration, discussions should and can revolve around methodology. Gender integration and integration of a gender perspective answers the primary question of "how can gender be properly integrated into the work of the Council?"*

## **UNITED NATIONS**

### **UN General Assembly**

The 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly opened on September 18 amid calls for multilateral solutions to global challenges.

Srgjan Kerim, president of the General Assembly, said climate change, financing for development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, countering terrorism, and reforms aimed at improving the management, effectiveness and coherence of the world body are among the top priorities during the session.

A number of high-level events will be held on the sidelines of the current session of the general assembly on such issues as climate change, Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, and the Middle East.

*More on:* [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-09/19/content\\_6749987.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-09/19/content_6749987.htm)

### **Women must strengthen lobbying Strategies for Gender Equality Architecture Reform**

On Monday, 17 September 2007--the last day of the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly (GA)--the GA was expected to adopt at least one procedural resolution on UN Reform and another separate resolution on gender. Despite support from the now-former GA President and numerous Member States, neither resolution was passed-- which means discussions on the issue will continue during the 62nd session. More on: <http://www.wedo.org/> and <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/>  
*IAW supports the campaign on the Gender Equality Architecture in UN Reform (GEAR).*

### **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People**

UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman issued a [statement](#) praising UN Member States after they voted in the Assembly on Thursday 6 September – after more than 20 years of debate – to approve the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

#### **Non-binding text**

A non-binding text, the Declaration sets out the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, as well as their rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health, education and other issues. The Declaration emphasizes the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations.

It also prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them, and their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own visions of economic and social development.

#### **Children and adolescents**

The majority of the 370 million indigenous people worldwide are children or adolescents, and often among the most marginalized and vulnerable members of their societies.

Ms Veneman's remarks join similar statements from General Assembly President Sheikh Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour welcoming the Declaration's adoption.

More on: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html>

### **Child deaths fall below 10 million for first time**

Child deaths worldwide have reached a record low, falling below 10 million per year for the first time to 9.7 million, down from almost 13 million in 1990, according to new figures release by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)).

*Much of the progress is the result of the widespread adoption of basic health interventions, such as early and exclusive breast feeding, measles immunization, Vitamin A supplementation and the use of insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria.*

Of the 9.7 million children who perish each year, 4.8 million are from Sub-Saharan Africa and 3.1 million from South Asia. In the developing world, child mortality is considerably higher among children living in rural areas and in the poorest households. In developed countries there are just six deaths for every 1,000 live births.

The Latin American and Caribbean region is on track to achieve the child mortality Millennium Development Goal, with 27 deaths on average for every 1,000 live births, compared to 55 per thousand in 1990.

#### **Africa**

There has been significant progress in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Under-five mortality has declined 29 per cent between 2000 and 2004 in Malawi. In Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda and Tanzania child mortality rates have declined by more than 20 per cent.

The highest rates of child mortality are still found in West and Central Africa. In southern Africa hard-won gains in child survival have been undermined by the spread of HIV and AIDS.

More on: [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_40855.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_40855.html)

#### **Family Planning**

The Alan Guttmacher Institute Occasional Report No. 37, June 2007, focuses on the unmet need of over 1 million married women aged 15-49 years: these women do not use contraceptives although they do not wish to become pregnant.

The highest percentages of married women with unmet need are in African countries which average 25% against 15% in all developing countries. The rates are highest in Rwanda (38%), Uganda (35%), Ethiopia (34%).

### **Scandalous figures**

One of the main reasons for these scandalous figures is the lack of access to contraceptives and quality counselling. Numerous women were convinced they could not become pregnant, others feared negative health consequences of contraception.

The study says family planning programmes must better take into account this need and recommends more investment in those countries where the rates are highest, concentrating on the target groups with the lowest prevalence of contraception: rural women, poor women and women with little education.

Source: [www.guttmacher.org/media/experts/singh.html](http://www.guttmacher.org/media/experts/singh.html)

*Comment: As a most urgent step towards implementing these recommendations, funding for family planning as part of reproductive health (which has steeply diminished for years) must quickly regain levels which allow successful action.*

*Gudrun Haupter, Convenor of the IAW Commission on Health*

### **Kleptocrats - UN Report on Corruption**

The United Nations and World Bank launched a bid to strip crooked leaders of the money they steal from poor countries, and to plough the sums into health and development efforts.

"From now on it should be harder for kleptocrats to steal the public's money, and easier for the public to get its money back," said Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the world body's agency in charge of the initiative.

Bent leaders cheat developing countries of 1 trillion-1.6 trillion dollars a year through smuggling, corruption and tax evasion, according to a report released to mark the launch of the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative.

*"Every 100 million dollars recovered could fund full vaccinations for 4 million children, provide water connections for some 250,000 households, or fund treatment for over 600,000 people with HIV/AIDS for a full year," the report said.*

#### **Countries to ratify the U.N. Convention against Corruption**

The initiative will seek to prevent the theft by helping developing countries to improve governance and accountability and by urging wealthy countries to stop providing safe havens for the loot.

Countries which have ratified the treaty include British crown dependencies such as Guernsey and the Isle of Man; Bermuda and the Bahamas among others in the Caribbean; European states such as Liechtenstein and Monaco; Pacific island states including Samoa and Vanuatu; and parts or all of Djibouti, Malaysia, Panama, and the United States. Among members of the G-8 wealthy countries, Canada, Germany, Italy and Japan have yet to ratify.

#### **Significant sums have been siphoned off**

Public officials in developing and former Soviet-bloc countries pocket bribes worth at least 20 billion-40 billion dollars a year -- roughly 20-40 percent of the value of all official development aid, said the report.

#### **The embezzlers**

Anti-corruption group Transparency International has estimated that Suharto, who was forced to resign as Indonesian president in 1998, embezzled 15 billion-35 billion dollars from his compatriots.

Deceased former heads of state Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, Mobutu Sese Seko of the former Zaire, and Sani Abacha of Nigeria pocketed as much as 5 billion dollars each, the watchdog added.

Africa loses 148 billion dollars -- 25 percent of its economic output -- to corruption every year, according to the African Union.

UN agencies said that in the 1990s, corrupt officials pocketed 5.5 billion dollars in Nigeria and 3 billion dollars in Kenya.

Recovering stolen assets can be a time-consuming business: It took the Philippines 18 years to get back 624 million dollars that Marcos had secreted in Swiss bank accounts.

*By Abid Aslam. More on: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=39291>*

## **AROUND THE WORLD**

### **Limiting cluster bombs**

At the end of June, a few members of the US Congress made a discreet move to limit this country's exports of cluster bombs, a weapon that has been used around the world since the Second World War to devastating humanitarian consequences.

Senator Patrick Leahy, a Democrat from Vermont, included a provision in the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill that would significantly limit the US export of cluster bombs.

Buried amongst funding provisions for the US State Department, military aid programmes and

economic development initiatives, the cluster bomb provision would effectively ban US exports of the weapon.

### **US stockpile of one billion cluster bomblets**

The United States has a stockpile of nearly one billion cluster bomblets, the small exploding submunitions that rain down from a cluster bomb. Some of these bomblets, many dating back to the Vietnam era, have a failure rate of up to 23 percent, according to published reports.

The provision included in the funding bill prohibits the sale or transfer of cluster bombs with a failure rate of more than one percent, effectively banning the sale of most of the U.S. arsenal.

The provision also bars the sale or transfer of cluster bombs to countries that don't agree to use them exclusively against clearly defined military targets and not where civilians live or are known to be present.

About the size of a can of soda or a size D battery, brightly coloured and intricately shaped, cluster bomblets can also turn a farmer's field into terror zone, a neighbourhood street into a booby trap. Cluster bombs are specifically designed to affect "soft targets" -- people. They have limited uses against bridges, railroads or military installations but can wreck havoc on entire battalions and nearby civilians.

### **Climate Change Conference**

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that he will convene an informal high-level event in New York on the margins of the General Assembly on 24 September to promote discussion on possible ways to move the international community toward negotiations on new global agreement on climate change at the upcoming [United Nations climate change conference in Bali in December](#).

The upcoming Bali summit, scheduled to take place from 3 to 14 December in Bali, Indonesia, seeks to determine future action on mitigation, adaptation, the global carbon market and financing responses to climate change for the period after the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol – the current global framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions – in 2012.

Country delegates at a five-day conference in Vienna at the end of August also discussed a recent report which underscores the major changes to patterns of investment and financial flows required to tackle climate change in the next quarter century.

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](http://unfccc.int/2860.php)) at <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

### **Hunger: a silent emergency in India's backyard**

It could be a warehouse stocked with supplies for India's urgent flood relief operation: hundreds of boxes full of fortified biscuits from the UN World Food Programme (WFP) piled up to the ceiling. This stuffy, vast warehouse outside Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh state fills up and empties every month or two, like some cavernous, insatiable mouth. It's the back room to India's malnutrition crisis, in which a fifth of the population is malnourished and nearly half of all children are underweight - twice the rate of Africa.

*Independent India has been good at curbing famines but bad at battling chronic hunger, as Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has noted. But hunger is a crisis devoid of panics, screams and dramatic footage. Its silence makes it even more deadly. India has 57 million undernourished children - over a third of the world total.*

According to India's latest National Family Health Survey, infant mortality stands at 57 per 1,000 births - lower than that of impoverished neighbour Bangladesh. "India remains one of the most undernourished countries in the world," said Professor Jean Drèze, hunger expert at the Delhi School of Economics.

### **Hunger is not an emergency**

"When hunger ruins the wellbeing and future of millions of children, the term 'emergency' seems appropriate." Journalists, politicians and donors tend to see emergencies as dramatic events - giant waves tearing into coastlines, earthquakes shattering cities, villagers stranded atop their flooded homes. Silent, gnawing hunger rarely makes headlines. The chronic crises in states like Madhya Pradesh remain forgotten - even as the rate of children underweight has climbed to a staggering 60 percent there in recent years.

### **Free mid-day school meals**

A barrage of government food programmes - among the largest in the world - are meant to do just that. India has committed itself to giving free mid-day school meals to all children.

In Jhabua, WFP hands out its fortified biscuits as a popular morning school snack. The under-fives are catered for by an armada of anganwadis, community care centres where women cook basic dishes for children under five. And the list goes on. "There is no dearth of schemes - you think of it and there is one," said WFP's Anand.

But hunger is a many-headed Hydra: Chop off one head and it just grows another. Inflation is one of them. India's boom is pushing veggies out of reach of the poor and beyond the budget of mid-day school meals.

Then there's the soil. Most Jhabuans, poor indigenous villagers, are stuck with small patches of land where it rains too much, or not at all, or nothing much grows. So they join India's exodus from farmland to the cities.

[More on: http://www.alertnet.org/db/blogs/22870/2007/07/15-154717-1.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/db/blogs/22870/2007/07/15-154717-1.htm)

*Sent to us by Ida Kurth, IAW convenor on Environment and Sustainable Development*

### **Inside the world of fatwas**

Recently, Darul Uloom Deoband in UP, India, the famous Islamic seminary which has a separate department for fatwas, issued one calling co-education of Muslim girls unIslamic. No matter how regressive and unpractical this opinion seems, especially in Indian conditions where literacy rate among women is abysmally low, the message that went out is that Islam discourages women's progress.

*A fatwa is nothing more than an opinion of a deemed scholar on a specific question. Obey it or ignore it. And since India is not an Islamic state, its breach cannot invite decapitation, stoning or imprisonment.*

Many publicity-hungry mullahs, even if their qualification to issue a fatwa is doubtful (only individuals trained in Islamic jurisprudence, Quran and Hadith can issue fatwas), often give inane and ridiculous fatwas. They eventually embarrass the whole community.

A Maulvi in Midnapore disliked Sania Mirza's short skirt, and pronounced it obscene and sacrilegious. The community leaders, including many respected clerics, had to quickly clarify that Mirza's dress, like her game, is her choice. But what got the limelight was not the defence of Mirza, but the opposition of some regressive Maulvis to her clothes.

### **Do understand the implication**

"A mufti must understand the implications of his opinion before he delivers it," says Zeenat Shaukat Ali, a teacher of Islamic Studies at Mumbai's St. Xavier's College. Ali is an erudite, liberal scholar who has penned several acclaimed books. She travels around the world and fights for the rights of women.

Unfortunately, no Muslim goes to her to seek a fatwa. They approach, instead, the likes of Mufti Abdul Ahad Falahi, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB)-appointed mufti and qazi (judge at the Sharia court) who has, in the last two years, dispensed around 700 fatwas on marriage, divorce, inheritance and business. He even addressed a number of queries concerning the community's interest in stock market.

### **Only Allah knows the truth**

In secular democracies like India, a Muslim disobeying a fatwa can wait for Allah's curse here, hereafter or in both the places. But ... every fatwa, in writing, invariably ends with the mufti's disclaimer: "This is my opinion. Only Allah knows the truth."

*This is an excerpt of an article, mailed to us by IAW member Anjana Basu. The whole article is on: [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Opinion/Sunday\\_Specials/Inside\\_the\\_world\\_of\\_fatwas/articleshow/2311012.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Opinion/Sunday_Specials/Inside_the_world_of_fatwas/articleshow/2311012.cms)*

## **BOOKS - REPORTS - CAMPAIGNS - FILM**

### **Naomi Klein, the Shock Doctrine**

Ranging across the world, Klein exposes the strikingly similar policies that enabled the imposition of free markets in countries as different as Pinochet's Chile, Yeltsin's Russia, China and post-Saddam Iraq. At the most chaotic juncture in Iraq's civil war, a new law is unveiled that would allow Shell and



BP to claim the country's vast oil reserves. Immediately following September 11, the Bush Administration quietly out-sources the running of the "War on Terror" to Halliburton and Blackwater. After a powerful tsunami devastates the coasts of Southeast Asia, the pristine beaches are auctioned off to tourist resorts. New Orleans's residents, still scattered from Hurricane Katrina, discover that their public housing, hospitals and schools will never be reopened.  
Excerpts on: <http://www.naomiklein.org/shock-doctrine/excerpt>

### **AWID - second Fundher Report - Financial Sustainability for Women's Movements Worldwide**

*Is there really too little money to support existing women's rights initiatives? Is it that women's rights groups are not bold enough in their fundraising strategies? Is it that donors simply don't understand the urgency and importance of this work? Or is it that we, as progressive women's organizations and movements, need to change ourselves to respond better to the current challenges ???*

**Fundraising:** the challenges of seeking funds and mobilising resources for women's rights work is the subject of this report. With statistical analysis of the data from a survey questionnaire of 1200 worldwide responses. On: <http://www.awid.org/moneyandmovements/>

### **Women in the US campaigning for ratification CEDAW**

The campaign is on: <http://www.capwiz.com/now/directory/committees.tt?commid=sfore>

### **Goals for Girls**

The United Nations Children's Fund and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) have kicked off a new "**Goals for Girls!**" campaign which aims to promote education, gender equality and women's rights through sport. On: [http://www.unicef.org/china2007/index\\_40818.html](http://www.unicef.org/china2007/index_40818.html)

**First Woman Appointed to Head Top Medical School:** Harvard researcher Nancy C Andrews, MD has been tapped to head Duke University's School of Medicine, becoming the only woman to permanently head a top ten Medical School

### **Anti-trafficking film 'Trade'**

Trade is being co-hosted by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)), film distribution company Roadside Attractions and international human rights organization Equality Now. Human trafficking is a multi-billion dollar global industry whose primary victims are women and girls.

### **Note**

We are sending this Newsletter as an attachment, saved in Word 97.  
Please be so kind to advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, so we can mail them this Newsletter too.

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