

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

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

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

IAW NEWSLETTER April 2008, no. 4



Equal Rights

Dear members,

The main issue of this newsletter is women and health. On sexual reproductive health, population and development, female genital mutilation, vaccine therapies, HIV/AIDS and immunotherapy etc. The Human Rights Council (HRC) has covered an enormous amount of issues. New is the UPR or Universal Periodic Review, where each of the participating 48 member states is confronted with its own profile on human rights, as seen by the others. Louise Arbour leaves the HRC after a distinguished career; the United Arab Emirates appoints its first woman judge; UNIFEM has a new Executive Director, and rising Food prices are causing problems. At the end of the newsletter, as usual, upcoming conferences and interesting links.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

Family Planning essential for Maternal and Child Health

Addressing a week long meeting of the U.N. Commission on Population and Development (CPD), recently, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director, said there are some 200 million women in the developing world with unmet needs for effective contraception.

The highest number, she said, is in Africa. "The result is increasing numbers of unwanted pregnancies, rising rates of unsafe abortion, and increased risks to the lives of women and children," she told the Commission.

The current crisis, Obaid pointed out, is also threatening to undermine the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including reduction in extreme poverty and improvement on maternal health. "We will not attain the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG 5 on maternal health, if we do not ensure universal access to reproductive health," Obaid said.

Sexual and reproductive health

"Sexual and reproductive health is essential to women's empowerment and gender equality. And family planning is key to maternal and child health," she added.

Obaid noted that research indicates that ensuring access to family planning alone would reduce maternal deaths by 20 to 35 percent and child deaths by 20 percent.

Cairo 1994

Following the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994, there was little progress because increases were negligible. But by 2005, donor assistance stood at 7.4 billion dollars. The figure for 2006 is expected to reach about 8.1 billion dollars, with further increases to 9.8 billion dollars in 2007 and 10.3 billion dollars in 2008.

Since 1994, the population and health situation in the world has changed dramatically.

Estimations

The ICPD estimated about 8 percent of total population assistance for STDs/HIV/AIDS; 62 percent for family planning services; 29 percent for basic reproductive health services; and one percent for research, data and population and development policy analysis.

But actual spending in 2005, for example, saw a dramatic increase for STDs (72 percent), while funding for family planning services declined to 7.0 percent and basic reproductive health services to 17 percent, with an increase of 4.0 percent for research and analysis.

HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS crisis is far worse than anticipated while infant, child and maternal mortality remain unacceptably high in many parts of the world. In addition, continues the report, health care costs have increased substantially since 1994.

As a result, the ICPD targets are not sufficient to meet current developing-country needs in all four areas.

Without a firm commitment to population, reproductive health and gender issues, "it is unlikely that the goals and targets of the Conference and the Millennium Summit (and MDGs) will be met," the report concludes. On: <http://www.un.org/News/>

Editor's comment: The 53rd CSW 2009 is on "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS".

Female Genital Mutilation - FGM - a WADS project

Tanzania currently hosts nearly 140,000 Congolese refugees. Most live in three camps in western Tanzania's Kigoma Province. Approximately 55,000 Congolese refugees reside in Nyarugusu camp, 45 miles (75 km) northeast of the village of Kasulu. An estimated 30,000 Congolese reside in Lugufu I refugee camp, and some 55,000 reside in neighbouring Lugufu II camp. The Lugufu camps are approximately 50 miles (80 km) southeast of the Lake Tanganyika port town of Kigoma.

Violence and deteriorating humanitarian conditions in DRC during the first 11 months of 2002 pushed many Congolese refugees into Tanzania. As the ever-increasing number of refugees and asylum-seekers from all over Africa spill into Tanzania, FGM follows.

And as more and more women join the exodus, Refugee camps doctors are struggling to deal with such 'anatomically different' women.

According to Dr. Rehema Songoro of the obstetrics and gynaecology unit at Nyarugusu hospital, the numbers of mutilated women coming to the camp hospital for ante-natal care are steadily increasing.

Childbirth extremely complicated

For a 'circumcised' woman childbirth is extremely complicated. First, Dr Rehema said, it is virtually impossible for doctors to perform internal examinations on labouring women. This can have grave consequences for the life of the foetus as well as the mother... The option of a Caesarean in a hospital is a luxury not available in the societies from which some of the women come (Somalia and Ethiopia/Eritrea).

According to Rehema, the complications that arise from obstructed labour could have near fatal consequences. She recalls a 'circumcised' patient who had to undergo lengthy surgery to repair the damage done to her as a child. A number of horror stories abound - about brides being 'opened up' with kitchen knives on their wedding night; of widows being sewn closed again until another husband is found for them. The procedure has extremely serious consequences for the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of women.

Different types of mutilation

Though there are many interpretations regarding the origins of female genital mutilation, the common thread running through societies which advocate and practise it is that *women who are 'uncircumcised' are 'unclean.'*

There are different types of mutilation but most serve to severely inhibit, if not totally eradicate, the sexual response of women. This act of suppressing female sexuality has often been attributed to religion - the Islamic faith in particular.

CEDAW

Women Action for Peace and Development (WADS) is trying with a FGM project in Tanzania to stress that female genital mutilation is a violation of women's human rights and a breach of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

WADS (Women Action for Development and Solidarity) is trying to find sponsors for a project to put an end to this practice in the refugee camps.

Sex-tests medics to face the heat - Punjab orders action

The Punjab government has decided to tighten the noose around doctors as well as registered practitioners of homeopathy and ayurveda who guarantee the birth of a son. Medical education and research secretary Jagjit Puri today ordered action against medical practitioners advertising various "cures".

Hoardings promising magic cures, especially for sexual disorders, and assuring the birth of a male child violated the guidelines of the Medical Council of India, the Indian Medical Association and other affiliating bodies, he said.

"It is not only unethical and illegal but it is also turning the pious medical profession into a money-minting pursuit. Anybody found guilty would be served with a show cause notice for cancellation of his licence," Puri warned.

Gender identification kits

Hi-tech gender identification kits have entered not only towns but also rural areas in the state with one of the lowest sex ratios. Punjab has a dismal ratio of less than 874 females to 1,000 males. The national average is 933.

The kits, imported from the US and Canada, are passed on to willing parents eager to find out the sex of the unborn child. Costing Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000, they claim to tell the baby's sex within the first seven weeks of pregnancy.

Each kit comes with built-in equipment for collecting the finger-pricked blood sample, which is sent to a laboratory in the US and the results are conveyed within 48 hours by email or on the phone.

While sex determination through ultrasound is banned, these kits are not covered by the law.

The local municipalities and transport departments are being approached to remove all hoardings and posters promising cures.

"The advertisements are mostly misleading as their main purpose is only sex determination. We are in the process of identifying the doctors," a health officer said.

On: http://www.telegraphindia.com/1080417/jsp/frontpage/story_9148953.jsp

Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

Australia - Vaccine Therapies Need Boost

Global resources for fighting AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria now total eight billion US dollars a year. "The amount should be several times more than this. After all, we are only talking about the price of a couple of jet fighters. That's all you need to save several million lives," says Nossal. Eminent medical scientist Gustav Nossal participated in the three-day Sir Mark Oliphant Vaccine and Immunotherapy Technologies conference in Canberra this month.

The conference put the spotlight on how vaccines and immune system treatments under development today have the potential to protect the world against the main killer diseases -- Cancers, HIV, Tuberculosis (TB), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and H5N1 Avian 'flu.

Prevention

An estimated 2.3 million deaths a year have been prevented by the increase in vaccination levels. Measles deaths had fallen by 60 percent since the vaccination campaign was stepped up and the aim is to slash measles deaths by 90 percent by 2010.

"Apart from vaccination there has also been significant progress in delivering advanced anti-AIDS drugs to more than two million Africans a year -- a feat which many had claimed was impossible. However, it should be seven million," says Nossal, a consultant to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

HIV/AIDS - immunotherapy

While HIV is still proving a 'slippery' vaccine target, research using an animal model at the University of Melbourne has shown that immunotherapy can be used to reduce levels of immunodeficiency virus in the body.

The immune system can be primed to attack the HIV virus more strongly, making it fitter to fight off the incidental infections and immune breakdown that lead to AIDS.

By Neena Bhandari. More on: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=41967>

Yellow fever - Campaign to vaccinate 5.7 million people across southern Mali

With thanks to the first-ever 'South-South' dose supply from South America's only manufacturer of yellow fever vaccine. Three million doses are coming from the Brazilian company Bio Manguinhos

while the other three million doses will be provided by Sanofi Pasteur – one of the other manufacturers of yellow fever vaccine pre-qualified by the UN World Health Organization (WHO).

Mali's mass vaccination campaign is part of the Yellow Fever Initiative that has \$58 million worth of support from GAVI, the public-private alliance for vaccinations, to drastically reduce the numbers at risk from the disease in West Africa.

Mali is the third country, after Togo and Senegal, to undertake a national preventive vaccination campaign as part of the Initiative, with other countries due to follow as soon as sufficient vaccine is available. Because of its severity, even a single case (such as Mali reported in 2007) is a public health concern, WHO said.

Twelve African countries

The 12 countries taking part on the Yellow Fever Initiative are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

"The fact that we have now three manufacturers of WHO pre-qualified Yellow Fever vaccine around the world means that we are much more able to meet supply demands both for emergency and routine vaccination," Adamou Yada, Programme Manager for Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response in WHO's African Region, said.

"This first mass shipment of vaccine from one developing country to another is proof of that," Dr. Yada added. More on: <http://afro.who.int/press/2008/pr20080410.html>

SHORTAGES CAUSE RISING FOOD PRICES

FAO - Domestic food prices spur social unrest

Food riots have been reported in Egypt, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Madagascar, the Philippines and Haiti in the past month.

In Pakistan and Thailand, army troops have been deployed to avoid the seizing of food from the fields and from warehouses.

"Food price inflation hits the poor hardest, as the share of food in their total expenditures is much higher than that of wealthier populations," said Henri Josserand of FAO's Global Information and Early Warning system. "Food represents about 10-20 percent of consumer spending in industrialized nations, but as much as 60-80 percent in developing countries, many of which are net-food-importers."

Forecast for 2008

Addressing the first Global Agro-Industries Forum in New Delhi, along with the heads of UNIDO and IFAD, Dr Diouf highlighted the important role that agro-industry had to play in overcoming these problems. "World food prices have risen 45 percent in the last nine months and there are serious shortages of rice, wheat and maize," Dr Diouf said.

A combination of factors, including reduced production due to climate change, historically low levels of stocks, higher consumption of meat and dairy products in emerging economies, increased demand for biofuels production and the higher cost of energy and transport have led to surges in food prices.

Worldwide, 37 countries are currently facing food crises, according to the report.

[Click here](#) for the complete list of countries in need of external assistance.

More on <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26236&Cr=living&Cr1=> and on:

And on: <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2008/1000826/index.html>

IAW representative at FAO: Bettina Corke

UNITED NATIONS

UN - new body to advise on the overhaul of the UN

The General Assembly decided to reshape the Organization's justice system after a 2006 panel concluded that the administration of justice in the UN "fails to meet many basic standards of due process established in international human rights instruments."

A five-member Internal Justice Council will consist of a staff representative, a management representative and two distinguished external jurists, one nominated by the staff and one by management, all of whom were approved today. The fifth member, the chair, will be a distinguished juror chosen by these four.

More on: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26290&Cr=vaccin&Cr1=>

UNIFEM

Inés Alberdi of Spain has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM.

Inés Alberdi was an elected Deputy in the Madrid Assembly. She served as an expert for the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission on the networks Family and Work and Diversification of Occupational Choices for Women (1998–2000) and worked for the Inter-American Bank as Adviser for Women in Development (1989–1990).

She also served as a Member of the Board of INSTRAW, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (1986–1989).

Human Rights Council covers a wide range of Issues

The Human Rights Council, having met for its 7th session from 3 March to 1 April 2008 in Geneva, adopted 36 resolutions on a wide range of issues, extended the mandates of 13 Special Procedures and established the mandate of an Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

NEW - Universal Periodic Review - UPR

The UPR is one of the main new features of the Human Rights Council, designed to review the fulfilment by each UN Member State of its human rights obligations every four years.

The Council will review 48 Member States every year, dividing the work into three sessions.

The first session will be held 7-18 April, the second between 5-16 May 2008 and the third session between 1 to 12 December 2008.

Council votes on contentious resolution

One of the most contentious resolutions adopted by the Council was draft resolution A/HRC/7/L.24 and, in particular, an amendment to the draft. *It mandates the Special Rapporteur, in addition to their "traditional" functions, to report on any instances of "abuse of the right to freedom of expression that constitutes an act of racial or religious discrimination."*

Many States opposed this amendment, for example Egypt. Despite these concerns, the amendment and the amended draft resolution were adopted by a vote, the first time that the Council had to vote on an amendment to a resolution.

Links

Information on the UPR is available on: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx.

Full report of the 7th session on: http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=471

The eighth session of the Human Rights Council will be held from 2-13 June 2008.

Report of http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=471

See also the website of the International Service for Human Rights: (www.ishr.ch).

IAW representative at the Human Rights Council: Helene Sackstein

Louise Arbour

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed "great regret" at the decision of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [Louise Arbour](#) to step down at the end of her first four-year term.

United Arab Emirates - UAE – Appoints its First Woman Judge

The oil-rich United Arab Emirates got its first woman judge, a job hitherto reserved for men in the conservative Gulf country.

UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahayan, acting in his capacity as ruler of Abu Dhabi, named Kholoud Ahmad Jouan al-Dhaheri as a judge in the emirate, the wealthiest and largest in the seven-member UAE federation, the official WAM news agency reported.

The move made the UAE the second Arab country in the Gulf after Bahrain to name a female judge.

The appointment reflects "the government's keenness to involve women in the development drive" and "boost their role in society," said Sultan Saaed al-Badi, a senior official of Abu Dhabi's judiciary.

"I will endeavour to perform my functions with utmost (competence) ... in order to provide a successful model of Emirati women working in the judiciary," Dhaheri said.

The new judge graduated in law and sharia (Islamic law) from UAE University and has been a practicing lawyer for eight years.

The UAE cabinet includes four women. Nine women also sit on the 40-member Federal National Council, an assembly that advises the government.

Sent to us by IAW President Rosy Weiss

CONFERENCES - EVENTS - INTERESTING LINKS

UNCTAD - Ghana 20-25 April 2008

The 12th Ministerial conference will revolve around the following theme: "Addressing the opportunities and challenges of globalization for development". The conference is UNCTAD's highest decision-making body. It meets every four years to set priorities and guidelines for the organization. On: http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php?id_article=395

FAO - 26th Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) 23 - 27 June, Innsbruck, Austria

CSW 2008 - Read the statement of your country in the 52nd session on: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/52sess.htm>

Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation

From 17-19 April 2009, as part of its 20th anniversary celebrations, the Women's Library and Information Centre [WLIC] will be holding an international symposium on "*The Problem of Source in Women's Memory.*" Symposium Secretariat: bka@marmara.edu.tr

Preparations for the **Doha Review Conference** in Qatar, 29 Nov. - 2 Dec. 2008, on: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/DohaReviewConferenceFlyer.pdf>

Campaign - Iranian women's rights activists are initiating a wide campaign demanding an end to discriminatory laws against women in the Iranian law. On: <http://www.we4change.info/english/>

Investing in People (IiP) - Equality Between Women and Men

Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations (including economic and social partners) active in the field of promoting women's rights and equality between women and men in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Syria and Tunisia.
Restricted Call for Proposals 2008 - Guidelines for grant applicants
The DEADLINE for the submission of Concept Notes is 7 May 2008.
On: http://www.wunrn.com/news/2008/03_08/03_24_07/032407_call.htm

1st European Conference on Politics and Gender to be held in Belfast, 21-23 January 2009.

More on: http://www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/standinggroups/ecpg_home

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 >
International Women's News	: Priscilla Todd (English)	< iaw.iwnews@womenalliance.org >
	: Mathilde Duval (French)	< aifnfi@womenalliance.org >
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