Dear IAW members,

We start this newsletter with the excellent article of Jeffrey D. Sachs, “Alive Today, Desperate Tomorrow”, September will be a busy month for the UN. The proceedings of the Summit on 14-16 September 2005 and those of the General Assembly can easily be followed on the Internet. You will find the URLs at the end of this newsletter.

The UN Institutions, like WHO and UNDP and UNESCO and UNIFEM and CEDAW and many others are doing good work. What would we do without them? Kay Fraleigh writes about CEDAW, and the UN people of WHO are asking for stronger health systems, to fight child and maternal mortality to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

**Alive Today, Desperate Tomorrow**

Jeffrey D. Sachs, August 19, 2005  

*Niger’s food emergency has reached the world’s headlines*, but the crisis there is only one part of a much larger disaster. On an extended trip this summer through Asia, the Middle East and Africa on behalf of the United Nations, I visited countless villages afflicted with extreme hunger. Whether caused by drought, exhausted soils, locusts or lack of high-yield seeds, the results were the same: desperation, disease and death.

Incredibly, the actions of the richest countries—which promised solidarity with the world’s poorest people at the G-8 Summit in July—have intensified the hunger crisis. Even today, donor governments’ aid efforts respond to hunger emergencies such as Niger’s with food relief, but fail to help with long-lasting solutions.

Expanding hunger reflects growing rural populations and inadequate food yields. Populations are growing because poor rural households choose to have many children, who work as farmhands and serve as social security for their parents. This intensifies poverty in the next generation, as average farm sizes shrink. Food yields are inadequate because these households lack inputs needed for modern and productive agriculture: soil nutrients, irrigation or other water-management techniques, improved seed varieties and sound agricultural advice.

**Villages isolated from Markets**

The problem is especially severe in landlocked countries, where high transport costs leave villages isolated from markets, and in regions that depend on rainfall rather than river-based irrigation. Yields, on average, barely support survival, and crop failures are common and deadly, while long-term global climate change, caused mainly by high energy consumption in the rich countries, may be exacerbating the frequency and severity of droughts.

**Macro-economic Stability?**

These impoverished villages need help to buy vital inputs for farming and to invest in basic infrastructure such as roads and electrification. Instead, donor governments and the World Bank have insisted for years that poor countries cut financing to these villages, under the guise of promoting “macro-economic stability”—a polite way of demanding debt repayment—and reflecting the ideological delusion that the private sector will step in.

But these policies have left hundreds of millions of people even more desperately poor and hungry. Millions die each year, either of outright starvation or from infectious diseases that their weakened bodies cannot withstand.

*The irony is that donors then respond with very expensive emergency food aid, which typically proves to be too little and too late.*

*A shipment of an equivalent dollar amount of fertilizer and improved seeds from, say, the United States to Africa would yield perhaps five times more food.*

If donors would implement this obvious and basic lesson, increased food yields could be turned into
sustained economic growth. Rural households would be encouraged to have fewer children, and to invest more in each child's health and education. Child survival rates would rise, reinforcing lower fertility rates. At the same time, increased educational opportunities for girls and women, and low-cost contraceptives provided by family-planning services, would empower them to marry later and have fewer children.

**Invest simultaneously in roads, ports, rural electricity and diversified production**

Donors should simultaneously help impoverished countries to invest in roads, ports, rural electricity and diversified production, in order to promote higher productivity and alternative livelihoods in the longer term. Villages currently trapped in hunger and subsistence agriculture would become commercial centers for food processing and exports, and even for rural industry and services supported by electrification, mobile phones and other improved technologies. This is a year of both widespread hunger and solemn promises by the rich countries. But emergency food aid is not enough. Donors should lend their support by backing long-term solutions aimed at increasing food production, slowing population growth and mitigating long-term global climate change.

Jeffrey Sachs is professor of economics and director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.


**Building stronger Health Systems**

key to reaching the Health Millennium Development Goals

Building up and strengthening health systems is vital if more progress is to be made towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the World Health Organization (WHO) said in a new report. Unless urgent investments are made in health systems, current rates of progress will not be sufficient to meet most of the goals. The report, Health and the Millennium Development Goals, presents data on progress on the health goals and targets and looks beyond the numbers to analyse why improvements in health have been slow and to suggest what must be done to change this. The report points to weak and inequitable health systems as a key obstacle, including particularly a crisis in health personnel and the urgent need for sustainable health financing.

**Avoidable Deaths**

Annual avoidable deaths in developing countries include: almost 11 million children under five, approximately one million people from malaria, and more than half-a-million women in pregnancy and childbirth. The HIV/AIDS pandemic takes three million lives each year.

With less than ten years to the target date of 2015, none of the poorest regions of the developing world are on track to meet the child mortality target. For maternal mortality, declines have been limited to countries which already have lower mortality levels. The goal of reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and reversing the incidence of malaria and other communicable diseases remains a huge challenge in sub-Saharan Africa. The safe water target may be achieved globally, but not in sub-Saharan Africa.

"Providing universal access to broad-based health services could save several million children's lives each year," said Dr Lee. "That would reverse the downward trends and bring us two-thirds of the way to meeting the child mortality goal, and 70% to 80% towards meeting the maternal mortality goal." "We have the treatments; the technology is known and affordable," Dr Lee aid. "The problem in many countries is getting the staff, medicines, vaccines and information to those who need them on time and in sufficient quantities. In too many countries, the health systems to do that either do not exist or are on the point of collapse."

A minimum of US$ 30-40 per capita is needed annually to finance a minimum health package, but many poor countries invest far less, on average US$ 10 per capita, and in some countries, as little as US$ 2 per capita. Achieving the health MDGs will be impossible without a considerable increase in investment and commitment from developing and donor countries. The UN Millennium Project recently said that meeting all the MDGs would require an estimated US$ 135 billion of Official Development Assistance, rising to US$ 195 billion by 2015.

Three out of eight goals relate to health, as well as eight out of 18 targets, and 18 of 48 indicators. With other agencies, WHO is responsible for statistics on 17 of the 18 health indicators.
Achieving the health-related goals and targets is a critical part of the MDGs, agreed to by 189 world leaders through the Millennium Declaration at a summit in 2000. Heads of state and government will again gather in New York from 14 - 16 September for the 2005 World Summit to review the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration. 22 AUGUST 2005 | GENEVA
Millenium development goals website on http://www.who.int/mdg/en/index.html

Africa's health ministers shrug off WHO fears - August 23, 2005
A WHO report yesterday stated that unless urgent investments were made in health systems, the current rates of progress would be insufficient to meet most MDGs.
Health Ministers from Africa gathering in Maputo to discuss their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) say they are resolute and optimistic despite World Health Organisation (WHO) fears.
Read more on: http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=271&fArticleId=2847263

IAW convenor for Health, Gudrun Haupter

Notes on the 33rd Session of CEDAW and a little bit more…
By Kay Fraleigh
The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women concluded its 33rd Session on July 22, 2005. Once again the experts on the Committee underscored the need for the elimination of stereotypical attitudes, as well as persistent customs, practices and traditions that keep women in inferior positions throughout the world. The States’ parties whose reports were examined during this session were: Benin, Burkina Faso, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Gambia, Guyana, Ireland, Israel and Lebanon. The Chairperson, Rosario Manalo of the Philippines, stated the obvious when she said, “much still needs to be done to overcome such attitudes and practices through awareness-raising campaigns, sensitization of public officials and society at large to foster an understanding of gender equality in line with the letter and spirit of the Convention.”
Yes, we do know the principle of equality of rights and respect for human dignity has not been fully realized in the everyday life of countless women. In this light, the Committee members continue to urge States’ parties to remove their reservations to any article of the Convention. In particular: Article 2 on policy measures to establish gender equality and non-discrimination; Article 7 on political and public life; Article 9 on nationality; Article 11 on employment; and Article 16 on marriage and family life. Reservations to Article 16 restrict a woman’s ability to reach her full potential as a human being since it allows decisions regarding her life in the family to fall under the jurisdiction of religious authorities and/or customary practices and laws which often discriminate against women. It is clear that reservations by State’s parties most certainly deny women the right to fully participate in the life of their community as adults.
Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling, the expert from Germany made this same point at the 100th Anniversary of International Alliance of Women in Berlin in September 2004, when she said, “Human rights are universal. While different cultural traditions and practices must be acknowledged and cherished these cannot be upheld justifying the exclusion of a person from the enjoyment of her/his human rights.”
The State’s parties giving their reports acknowledge the seriousness of the problems they face in implementing the Convention. NGOs present at the session felt there is a lack of political will on the part of the State’s parties, particularly in protecting the rights of minority, asylum-seeking, refugee, and migrant women.
However, a good beginning has been made. 180 countries have ratified the Convention and are eager to show they have included the principle of equal rights in their policies and legislations. It now remains the responsibility of the CEDAW experts and NGOs to critically monitor the State’s parties reports to ensure these good intentions and efforts at reform are nurtured and firmly embedded in policies and practices.
The problem of monitoring reports in a timely fashion is a serious drawback to the Committee’s work. Since the ‘exceptional session’ in August 2002, a new backlog of reports from 55 states has accumulated. This backlog may be a disincentive to State’s parties to fulfill their obligations. What a dilemma! In an effort to get up to date in monitoring the reports the Committee
The Secretary General, in his report on UN reform, has stressed that the seven international human rights treaty bodies (on civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; discrimination against women; racial discrimination; the rights of the child; and on migrant workers) should craft a coordinated and standardized document for use by the State’s parties to the treaties. The State party would be encouraged to submit a common core document (CCD) summarizing its adherence to the full range of international human rights treaties to which it is a party. The CCD would include information on basic norms and provisions common to most treaties, as well as additional information specific to an individual treaty. A draft on guidelines for the CCD has been prepared by the Secretariat of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).

The CEDAW Committee finds there are a number of concerns still to be resolved around the whole approach to the CCD and the treaty specific document (TSD). Nevertheless, the Committee does agree, reporting should be done in a framework of harmonized guidelines. Such a reporting procedure may ease the burden on the State’s parties. It may also contribute to mainstreaming a gender perspective into the implementation of all human rights treaties. When considering the basic norms and provisions of the seven human rights treaties, the Committee recognizes it is important to bear in mind relevant differences and nuances. The Committee is of the opinion that the consistent approach to human rights protection and reporting should not amount to the smallest common denominator in interpreting human rights in general and women’s human rights in particular.

The Committee reminds us that “the Convention was adopted in 1979 because formal and substantive discrimination against women continued to exist despite the fact that other human rights instruments prohibited it. At the same time, as legal research has shown and developments have proven, specific forms of discrimination against women were not even recognized as human rights violations.” Today one can ask, what is different now? The Committee plans to take a final decision on the draft guidelines in 2006. In the end, the monitoring and implementation of the Convention must not be trivialized: the Convention’s integrity must be maintained.

Kay Fraleigh is the UN representative in New York for IAW.

**Bolton throws UN Summit into chaos**

John Bolton, Washington's new ambassador to the United Nations, has called for wholesale changes to a draft document due to go before a UN summit next month aimed at reshaping the world body. Mr Bolton, a long-standing UN critic who was given a temporary appointment by George Bush three weeks ago after the United States Senate failed to agree on his nomination, has proposed 750 amendments to the draft and called for immediate talks on them.

**750 amendments**

The Bolton amendments, published in the US press, seek to play down the emphasis given to alleviating poverty, and expunge all references to the millennium development goals, including the target for wealthy countries to donate at least 0.7% of national income to the developing world. America currently gives less than 0.2% in such aid. The changes would also scrap provisions in the draft calling for action against global warming, and remove endorsements of the International Criminal Court and the comprehensive test-ban treaty - both of which are opposed by the Bush administration. Instead, Washington is pushing for more emphasis on international measures against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

*The Guardian, a selection, on* [http://www.guardian.co.uk/usa/story/0,12271,1556790,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/usa/story/0,12271,1556790,00.html)

**Global commitments to small arms controls under threat from US at United Nations World Summit**

*Press release, Friday 26 August 2005*

Activists around the world today condemned US attempts to remove all references to controlling the small arms trade from a United Nations document due to be signed by more than 170 world leaders next month.
With less than three weeks before heads of state arrive in New York for the unprecedented summit on poverty and UN reform, the US has taken an axe to the proposed outcome document for the summit, requesting the deletion of the only two commitments on small arms:

*  "To ‘adopt and implement an international instrument to regulate the marking and tracing, illicit brokering, trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons.’"

*  To implement the 2001 UN Programme of Action. This agreement was an early step by the international community towards controlling the trade in small arms.

**Support**

More than 140 States have expressed support during the last few months of negotiations for the inclusion of one or both of these commitments on small arms in the measures to be agreed by the summit. The World Summit will set the agenda on security and development for the years to come. The uncontrolled proliferation of guns is the missing link for both of these issues. How can people work their way out of poverty when they can’t step outside for fear of bullets? The majority of governments who are beginning to recognise this must not allow the US to let arms control slip off the agenda,” said Rebecca Peters, Director of IANSA.

**New global legally-binding treaty**

Small arms kill at least 300,000 people a year and injure over a million more. They prevent access to healthcare, education and humanitarian assistance and fuel the conflicts that destroy economies and employment opportunities. IANSA members are calling for a new global legally-binding treaty to control the arms trade. The World Summit will take place at UN headquarters in New York on 14-16 September. Negotiations on the outcome document are now in their final stages. The text of the US proposed amendments is available at [www.reformtheun.org](http://www.reformtheun.org).

**The MDGs and the EU - Conclusions on UN Summit**

Recalling the conclusions agreed by the European Council in June and its own decisions of 24 May, the General Affairs and External Relations Council supports the efforts of the UN General Assembly President in drafting a declaration, based on the concepts and proposals contained in the Secretary-General's March Report “In larger freedom”. In particular, the Council emphasises the importance of:

- more and better aid, including debt relief and innovative sources of funding for development, to meet the ODA objectives and the Millennium Development Goals and other existing commitments from major international conferences and recalls the EU's recent commitments to increase levels of ODA;
- good governance, the social dimension of globalisation, and the special needs of Africa;
- international trade as an engine for development, the call for rapid completion of the Doha Development Round, and the call for market access for LDCs;
- its conclusions of 24 May, which inter alia highlight the importance of an intensified multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS as laid down in the European Programme for Action to confront HIV/AIDS. The EU further recognises that the MDGs cannot be attained without progress in achieving the Cairo goal of universal sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission;
- strengthening gender equality in all UN activities;
- strengthening the UN's human rights machinery including the establishment of a Human Rights Council in order to truly elevate the Commission on Human Rights and reinforcing the role and resources of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights;

This is a selection only. Read more on: [http://europa.eu-un.org/articles/cs/article_4929_cs.htm](http://europa.eu-un.org/articles/cs/article_4929_cs.htm)

**Water, Water Everywhere ....**

The crisis-weary African continent, which has two of the world's longest rivers -- the 6,400-kilometre Nile River and the 4,370-kilometre Congo River -- is suffering from a virtual economic paradox: a shortage of water amidst potentially plentiful supplies. "In spite of a few large rivers like the Congo and the Nile, 21 of the world's most arid countries, in terms of water per person, are located in Africa," South Africa's Minister of Water Affairs and
Forestry told a symposium marking "World Water Week" in the Swedish capital.

The Nile and its tributaries flow through nine countries: Egypt, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. The Congo, the world's fifth longest river, flows primarily through DRC, People's Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and partially through Zambia, Angola, Cameroon and Tanzania.

Thalif Deen, STOCKHOLM, August 23 - more on: http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=30001

Water, Water Everywhere ....

DORI, Burkina Faso, Aug 21, (Reuters) - Goring the air with their horns and pawing the earth with their hooves, dozens of bony cattle file into a market in Burkina Faso to be sold under the anxious eyes of their owners.

The frenzied haggling in the northeastern town of Dori is a sign not of roaring commerce, but desperation among Fulani herders struck by the same drought that has left millions hungry in neighbouring Niger and Mali. With their crops ruined because of failed rains, the herders are now being forced to sell their most precious commodity at prices that will barely raise enough to buy three days of grain for their hungry families.

"There are far too many animals being sold at this market at the moment," says Brahima Bokou, a market middleman. "If the year is good, then the people here don't sell too many animals. This year, we have to sell each Friday, just to pay for cereal."

The food crises affecting parts of Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Mauritania are partly the result of drought and locusts wrecking harvests in West African countries that rely on subsistence farming. But the herders' plight reveals a more complex poverty trap in which a natural shock upsets finely balanced, loosely regulated markets, sending the most vulnerable people into a downward spiral from which they may never fully recover.

Prices Collapse

The Fulani herders -- nomads who form one of West Africa's largest ethnic groups -- suffered the first blow when drought and locusts hit their millet harvest, forcing them to sell livestock to buy food they would normally have grown themselves.

The influx of cows onto the market created an excess of supply and drove prices down to 15,000 CFA francs ($28) for a cow that might have fetched 100,000 CFA francs ($187) last year.

Even cows that did not succumb to the drought make a sorry sight at the market, their sunken flanks testimony to three months without grazing, further reducing their value.

The World Food Programme (WFP) says herders in Burkina Faso lost an average of 23 percent of their stock to drought and starvation and have had to sell a further 50 percent to survive.

Niger

The situation is even worse in Niger, where British aid agency Oxfam says nomads have lost an average of 70 percent of their animals, forcing many families to eat leaves to survive.

"To these people, losing your animals is like losing your life savings," said Natasha Kofoworola Quist, Oxfam's regional director for West Africa. "Twelve centuries of nomadic culture are at risk if these people do not get long-term help to rebuild their livelihood," she said in a statement.

Speculation

Traders have compounded the herders' woes by holding back stocks of millet and later selling them at high prices. Despite a cereal surplus of 435,000 tonnes last year across Burkina Faso, prices in the north have more than doubled, partly due to speculation by traders, according to aid workers.

Read more on: http://today.reuters.com/News/CrisesArticle.aspx?storyId=L14504150

Water, Water Everywhere ....

Flooding, Mumbai

During the flooding crisis in Mumbai, it was seen that there is no established way for the Government authorities (or for anyone else, including NGOs themselves) to interact easily with a group through which information to and from NGOs could be conveyed.

This highlighted the need for a Council of Mumbai NGOs. An NGO Council has been formed on August 22, 2005. The Committee consists of more than 75 organisations which represent the breadth
and depth of the NGO sector. The Council would act as the representative body of all NGOs and of the NGO sector in Mumbai. See: www.karmayog.com/ngocouncil/ngocouncil.html

NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

Palestinian and Israeli Women create global panel to work for just Middle East Peace
Based on their discussions at a recent United Nations-sponsored conference in Turkey, 35 Palestinian, Israeli and international women leaders and activists have established the first-ever global commission working to guarantee women's full participation in formal and informal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) said today. In an effort to work for genuine negotiation of a just and sustainable peace based on a two-State solution, the diverse group of women leaders met in Istanbul on 26-28 July and decided to establish an International Women's Commission (IWC). This complaint procedure does not provide an avenue for the redress of grievances. The group expects to formally launch the Commission in September 2005. "After three intensive days, women were able to overcome differences and agree upon what I view to be the most effective and substantive vehicle to bring about the change so urgently needed in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict," said Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM, who convened and chaired the meeting.

Security Council resolution 1325
The IWC will ensure implementation of the groundbreaking 2000 Security Council resolution 1325, which calls on all UN Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels.


Ticket quota for women?
New Delhi, Aug. 24: Two days after the ruling coalition failed to find a consensus on the women's reservation bill, the BJP-led Opposition alliance has walked the extra mile to agree on a watered-down version mooted by the Election Commission. But though Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, according to BJP sources, is inclined to accept the formula, it's unlikely that Sonia Gandhi or the Left would. The poll panel has proposed that all political parties earmark 33 per cent of their tickets for women candidates during any Lok Sabha or Assembly election - on pain of derecognition. This formula can become law through a simple amendment of the Representation of People's Act, done through a voice vote.

Reserves tickets rather than seats for women?
The problem with the proposal, the Left argues, is that it reserves tickets rather than seats for women, and thus hands parties a "handle" to sabotage the real intention behind the bill. "The Left fears that most parties would give the weak or losing seats to women," a source said. The United Progressive Alliance chairperson, too, reportedly shares this apprehension.

An amended bill?
Sonia is believed to be in favour of the amended bill, already drafted by the government, which proposed to raise the number of Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 830. This kills two birds with one stone, setting aside 277 (a third of 830) seats for women while leaving 553 to the general category (read men) - 10 more than now. The plan, when mooted early this month, received support only from the BJP with the Congress staying non-committal and the Left complaining about the elaborate delimitation process this would entail.

In its original form, the bill reserves for women a third of all seats in the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies. But it has repeatedly been thwarted by parties that want quotas within the quota - for minority women or those from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. (Reuters) Read more on the continuous struggle of women in India to get a fair representation in politics: http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050825/asp/nation/story_5154566.asp
Send to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

Heal the Planet, Heal Ourselves
NEW YORK, Aug 24 (IPS) - Ten years ago, Costa Rica received a modest 25,000-dollar United Nations grant to expand the use of biomass technology, which transforms the energy from organic
matter into fuel.

Today, the Biomass Users Network of Central America operates in seven countries and administers multi-million-dollar projects, with the ambitious goals of spurring rural development, preserving natural resources and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. It is this kind of success story -- merging sustainable development with environmental protection -- that must be replicated around the world if humanity hopes to ease the shocking poverty afflicting billions of people around the world, experts say.

Katherine Stapp on http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=30014

IAW Environment convenor, Ida Kurth

EVENTS - CONFERENCES - WEBSITES

Millennium Development Goals - 58th Annual DPI/NGO conference 7-9 September 2005

For further information and participation in the debate on issues around MDGs, visit the DPI/NGO Conference interactive website, http://www.undpingoconference.org launched on August 15, 2005. The website allows for worldwide participation and encourages social activists and advocates from around the world to join the discussions before, during, and after the UN September Summit. The website also provides information for participants and the media, and offers links to related documents.

Editors comment: http://www.undpingoconference.org is a wonderful UN website. Have a look at the programme of September 6, 7 and 8. Another interesting website about the September conferences and workshops at the UN is on http://www.srh-mdgs.org/ Highly recommended!

UN Report on all forms of violence against Women for the UN GA in 2006

The Secretary General of the UN will issue a report to the UN General Assembly on all forms of violence against women next year. Preparing that report is the UN Division for the Advancement on Women, which is using a variety of fora to accomplish that goal. Recognizing that NGOs will have a unique contribution to make to the outcome of that goal, both an expert group and an advisory group have been formed (please see www.un.org/womenwatch for details)

In addition, the NGO CSW NY is forming a virtual committee to network, share information and best practices, and provide a database of expertise in various areas of violence against women.

Note

To avoid misunderstanding, we always send the IAW Newsletter twice: 1) in the body of the e-mail, and 2) as an attachment, saved in Word 97 (changed). Both have exactly the same content. The only difference is, that the attachment has a better lay-out, so it will be easy for Affiliates to copy it and send it by post to IAW members without e-mail.

Also, please advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address.

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