Dear IAW members,

In a world full of news about violence and warlike conflicts, IAW is continuing to push women’s rights to the fore. There is still UN article 1325 stating that women should participate in negotiations for peace. There is still UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, giving compliments to the West African countries that are willing to work at peace. Was this influenced by our West African sisters, who started installing a “West African Centre on Gender and Conflict” in November 2005 in Burkina Faso?

Women’s rights are foremost in this newsletter. For example: in empowering women and young girls to protect themselves from getting AIDS; in defending women’s rights in political arenas, such as in Pakistan, where members of political parties are trying to put women's rights into law.

And as usual, you will find news about conferences, websites, events etc. at the end of this newsletter.

IAW Board and International Meeting

Dear IAW Board members, and Presidents of IAW Affiliates and Associates,

In accordance with Article XII of the Constitution, the IAW will hold a Board Meeting and the meeting of the International Committee in the City of Light, Paris, France 11-17 November 2006.

We are most eager to have a succinct report from each society about the work done in the areas covered in our Action Programme 2005-2007. Each society is invited to submit a more extensive report in about its activities to inform the work of the Commission Convenors and the UN Representatives in New York, Geneva and Vienna as well as at regional International Bodies.

If you need a personalised letter of invitation from the IAW Secretariat for purposes of fund-raising or obtaining a visa, please let me know at <iawsec@womenalliance.org> We can send you also the (preliminary) schedule for the week.

We look forward to receiving the registration form from you in the near future.
Alison Brown, IAW Secretary

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

PAKISTAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - BILLS INTRODUCED FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

ISLAMABAD, Aug 8: It was a rare women’s day in the National Assembly on Tuesday when they and their male allies overcame party affiliations and conservative obstructions to introduce three private bills to promote women’s rights.

After stormy proceedings centring on whether they conformed to Islamic teachings or not, the lower house majority voted for the introduction of the two bills seeking to protect women from domestic violence and a third seeking to amend a controversial Hadood ordinance about rape and adultery. The bills, authored mainly by women members from both sides of the political divide, will now be considered by a house standing committee before coming back to be debated and voted upon for passage.

The speaker’s rostrum was twice besieged by opposition and ruling coalition members seeking deletion of objectionable remarks or to press a point during furores.
Prevention and protection

The main Prevention of Domestic Violence Bill seeking to make provisions for the protection of women, children and family was moved by Mrs Sherry Rehman of the People’s Party Parliamentarians (PPP) while another — The Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) — by Mrs Mehnaz Rafi of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League who got her draft to be clubbed with the first one.

Mrs Rehman said her proposed legislation, which has been waiting on the house roster for a year, was needed because there was no provision now in the Pakistan Penal Code against domestic violence while women frequently became victims of offences such as acid-throwing, beatings and Kara-Kari honour killings.

Uproar

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sher Afgan Niazi provoked an uproar mainly from PPP benches as he opposed the introduction of the bill arguing that it was contrary to the Holy Quran, which, according to him, permitted repeated beating of disobedient women by their husbands — an interpretation disputed by several opposition members, including some Ulema from the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) alliance.

“If a wife is not on the right path, admonish her; if she does not change, then beat her; if she does not change even then, beat her again; and if that also does not work then send her out of the home,” he quoted the Holy Quran as saying.

PPP’s main legal Aitzaz Ahsan, one of the 14 other sponsors of Mrs Rehman’s bill, said the constitution guaranteed equal rights to men and women and the new legislation sought to rectify the situation cited by the minister through a “wrong interpretation” of the Quranic verses and that allowed “man’s barbarism over woman”.

As PPP members pressed for a vote, Law and Justice Minister Mohammad Wasi Zafar agreed to the reference of the bill to the house standing committee concerned, apparently to avoid a formal test of strength between the two sides while the ruling coalition seemed divided on the issue.

A selection: read more on: http://www.wunrn.com/news/08_07_06/081206_palistan_bills.htm

Pakistan: Fatwa Bans Women Working With NGOs

PESHAWAR, Aug 4 (IPS) - Negative publicity and attacks by Islamist groups on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with women have forced several to close their offices and move staff out of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

A long list of violence and even killings is to be found in an article by Ashfaq Yusufzai on:
http://soros.c.topica.com/maae2J2abspYqbSf5gbb

Send to us by Hélène Sackstein, Convenor of the IAW Social, Economic and Cultural Commission.

Empowering women migrant workers

This document presents information on UNIFEM's Regional Programme on Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Asia, which seeks to empower women migrant workers from a gender and rights-based development perspective.

The programme addresses legal migration of women migrant workers, with a special focus on domestic workers. Countries covered include Nepal, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, and Jordan as a destination site.

Outputs of the programme include:

* it has helped to create a new working contract for migrant women in Jordan
* resulted in a public decision by the Nepalese Cabinet to protect and promote the rights of Nepalese migrant workers abroad
* reviewed a provincial law on migration in Blitar, Indonesia from a gender-and-rights perspective
* set up a savings and investment programme for on-site and returning women migrants in the Philippines.


AIDS - a breathtaking human tragedy
Vaginal microbicides "or an oral prevention drug that a women could take every day without her partner knowing"

Gates and Clinton shrug off the AIDS cynics
The global fight against AIDS - Microsoft founder Gates and former American President Clinton - opened an international conference on the deadly disease yesterday by challenging governments to confront the virus and help end the stigma plaguing women.

25 million lives in 25 years
In a round-table discussion, the two said they have devoted so much time to AIDS, which has claimed more than 25 million lives since the first cases were uncovered in Africa 25 years ago, because they believe the disease is one of the greatest heartaches of their generation. "It's a breathtaking human tragedy," Clinton said during the first senior-level discussion of the week long 16th International AIDS Conference. "It is difficult to imagine how the world can grow together ... unless something serious is done to turn the tide of AIDS.”

More than 24,000 researchers, activists and health workers from 132 countries were attending the five-day summit. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the first reported cases of human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV. Since the beginning of the pandemic, nearly 65 million people have been infected with HIV globally and AIDS has killed more than 25 million people.

Bill Gates - microbicides that would empower women are priorities
Gates noted that between 2003 and 2005, the number of people in low- and middle-income countries on antiretroviral drugs increased by 450,000 each year. Yet over the same period, the number of people who became infected with HIV averaged more than 4 million a year. He said the development of a vaccine and drugs to prevent HIV infection, such as microbicides that would empower women in developing countries were now his priorities. "If we had a tool for women to use, like microbicides, I think that would change the course of this disease and we would finally start to have years where you would see less infection," Gates said.

The Microsoft founder - whose philanthropic pockets just got deeper with a US$30 billion (€23.5 billion) commitment from Warren Buffet to fight diseases such as AIDS - has stepped down from his day-to-day duties at the company to devote more time to charity. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has given US$1.9 billion (€1.5 billion) to support HIV/AIDS projects worldwide since 1995 and announced last week a US$500 million (€391 million) grant to the Global Fund to fight AIDS.

Melinda Gates
Shortly after Gates and Clinton spoke, Melinda Gates joined a panel of women and also called for prevention tools for women to protect against HIV infection, such as vaginal microbicides "or an oral prevention drug that a women could take every day without her partner knowing."

Women in the Third World, especially young ones who are married off against their will, typically have little say over their bodies or health and partners who do not use condoms. Melinda Gates said there were 16 microbicide early trials under way, but only five that were in more advanced testing. She added that AIDS activists need to make sure trials are ethical and done according to best clinical practice methods.

By Beth Duff-Brown, Associated Press Writer, published: 15 August 2006, on:
http://www.ecowasnews.com/ Message of Secretary General Kofi Annan on:

Convener of the IAW Health Commission, Gudrun Haupter.

International AIDS Conference
TORONTO - Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision not to attend the International AIDS Conference in Canada appears to have had more than just a symbolic impact. Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was to headline the meeting's opening ceremonies as a representative of Africa, the continent hardest hit by the pandemic. But she cancelled after learning that Canada's prime minister would not be there to officially greet her, conference organizers said. "Her non-attendance is really a direct consequence of Mr. Harper not being here," said Dr. Mark Wainberg, head of the McGill University Centre for AIDS and the conference co-chair. "I think, honestly, that he made a political mistake by not coming here to be with us."

Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf
The conference was "elated" when President Johnson-Sirleaf, Africa's first female head of state and a representative of the AIDS-ravaged sub-Saharan region, agreed to attend. But her office later withdrew, indicating that she would not come to a foreign country if the head of government would not be there to meet with her. Read more on http://www.ecowasnews.com/

**Call for widespread HIV testing**

Experts are calling for a massive increase in routine testing for HIV to try to combat the spread of the virus. Figures show that over 90% of people carrying HIV do not know they have it.

Dr Kevin De Cock, of the World Health Organization, said empowering doctors to test patients could have a significant effect. However, other delegates at the 16th international conference on HIV and AIDS in Toronto expressed concerns over civil liberties.


**Polygamous husbands behind rise in HIV/AIDS in women: UN study**

New Delhi, July 30. (PTI): The number of women living with HIV/AIDS is on the rise in India and a recent UN survey found that in a majority of cases the disease was passed on by polygamous husbands.

"The surveillance data indicates that a significant proportion of new infections is occurring in women who are in monogamous relationships and have been infected by husbands or partners who have multiple sex partners," said a recent study 'Gender Impact of HIV/AIDS in India', carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

"Biological, socio-cultural and economic factors make women and young girls more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. The HIV virus is more easily transmitted from men to women than from women to men," it said.

**Study in Six States of India**

The study -- carried out by UNDP, National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), and National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) -- was conducted to assess the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS in the six high prevalence states of India viz Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Manipur and Nagaland.

It found that in India, women account for around two million (39 per cent) of the approximately 5.2 million estimated cases of people living with HIV.

It found that nearly 60 per cent of the HIV-positive widows are nearly less than 30 years of age and staying with their natal families after being thrown out from their marital homes following the death of their husbands.

**Women as caregivers**

"Women account for more than 70 per cent of caregivers when it comes to providing care to PLWHAs. It is a matter of concern that nearly 20 per cent of caregivers themselves are HIV positive and need relaxation and extra nutritional care themselves," the study says.

On the health status and health-seeking behaviour of women, it says, "There are significant gender differences in the percentages of untreated opportunistic infections (that further lead to HIV and AIDS). Not only the percentage of women's illnesses, which go untreated is higher than that of men, but in case of women, financial constraints turn out to be an important reason for not seeking treatment".

While assessing the impact on education of female children in HIV households, the study points out that due to limited resources, the girls are more likely to be withdrawn from schools than boys as they are expected to take care of their younger siblings and household chores.

**Recommendations**

The study recommends the need to design programmes to empower women to negotiate safe sex with their husbands, access to information on HIV and tailor-made programmes for HIV-positive widows.

"There is a need to empower adolescent girls and women by increasing their knowledge about their body and sexuality as well as about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), HIV and AIDS. The facilities for the treatment of STI should be made more accessible by strengthening the existing services at primary and tertiary healthcare facilities," it suggests.

More on http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/001200607301110.htm

**What a Woman may be: Saudi Arabia - Part-time Wife**

Saudis Turn to ‘Misyar’ Marriage to Beat Inflation

RIYADH: Khaled never thought a form of temporary marriage would open the door to his happily-
ever-after. The 25-year-old Saudi security guard opted to marry Zeinab, also a Saudi, through a Misyar contract — a kind of marriage under which couples often live separately but get together regularly. Khaled and Zeinab are among thousands of people who choose Misyar in this ultraconservative kingdom where contact between unrelated men and women is forbidden and extramarital affairs regarded as a grave sin.

Misyar is allowed in Sunni Islam and it is legal in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam and other Middle East countries. But it is traditionally frowned upon and the fact that it leaves the wife financially vulnerable has angered many women’s activists and intellectuals.

**Misyar marriage legal, women’s rights activists angry**

After years of study, the influential Makkah-based Islamic Jurisprudence Assembly in April this year declared that Misyar marriage was legal, angering many women’s rights’ activists in the Gulf. “Misyar reduces marriage to sexual intercourse,” said Hatoun al-Fassi, a female Saudi historian. “For clerics to allow it is shameful for our religion.”

Influential Muslim cleric Youssef al-Qaradawi has given his blessing to Misyar, but said there should be at least some form of dowry to provide a guarantee for the wife.

**Socially unacceptable?**

“No doubt it is somehow socially unacceptable, but there is a big difference between what is Islamically valid and what is socially acceptable,” he recently told Al Jazeera television. Saudi clerics say Misyar is authorised as long as it meets the basic requirements of sharia, — consent of both parties, the blessing of the woman’s guardian, the presence of witnesses and a state marriage official. Misyar offers an alternative to cash-strapped men who want to avoid lavish weddings but would like a relationship, without incurring the wrath of the morality police. Under Misyar, the husband is not financially responsible for his wife.

In regular marriages in Saudi Arabia, men must pay for expensive ceremonies, huge dowries and a home. If the couple divorce, he must pay alimony and child support. **So Misyar appeals to men of reduced means, as well as men looking for a flexible arrangement — the husband can walk away from a Misyar and can marry other women without informing his first wife.**

Read the whole article by Souhail Karam, on http://www.wunrn.com/news/07_31_06/080106_saudi_arabia.htm

**Editor’s comment:** Instead of examining the powerful dowry system with all its inherent problems and effects, the men have found a way to get around it.

**In India, Women Fight Harassment of "Eve Teasing"**

On the streets of Bangalore, this booming Indian city, Laura Neuhaus says she is constantly on guard against men who brush against her body. "People run up and grab my butt, my breast and brush against me purposely," Neuhaus says. "It happens so fast." ”I will be walking with my boyfriends and it makes no difference. After that I go through post-traumatic stress. You are so angry and humiliated," she says. "There is no one to talk to."

To help stop the practice, the 23-year-old technology executive from the United States joined Blank Noise — a group that fights "Eve teasing," a euphemism in India for the sexual harassment or molestation of women.

According to official statistics, around 7,500 expatriates came to Bangalore for extended stays in 2005, and there are now around 15,000 foreigners working in the city, India's technology hub. Many of them spend much of their time in walled enclaves, safe from the streets while living in villas that often cost several hundred thousand dollars. But a few say it is time to break out and work to make their lives and those around them better.

"Foreign women such as myself usually are not exposed to this hidden side of Indian society and violent repressed sexual aggression," Neuhaus says. "I thought I should do my bit." On Sundays, she spends her time trying to recruit more expatriates who have borne the brunt of Eve teasing, to participate in demonstrations held by Blank Noise. "It is not an activist or radical group. My aim is to help increase public awareness of street sexual harassment because it not only perpetuates the subjugation of women, but often erodes the self-esteem of young girls," she says. "I saw there were other women who were planning to do something about it. Sexual harassment happens everywhere in the world. But only in India have I experienced Eve teasing," she says.

Read more on: http://www.sawf.org/newedit/edit07172006/index.asp

**Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu**
Conferences - Meetings - Websites - International Days

**International Conference on Sexual Violence.** Quebec City, Canada, 18-20 April 2007

**New Website on Sexual and Reproductive Health,**
and the Millennium Development Goals on http://www.srh-mdgs.org/

**A new I.L.O. report outlines the latest global employment trends** on
http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/4730.html
Send to us by IAW member Helen Self

Empowering Young Women to Lead Change - A Training Manual - **Author: World YWCA.** on:
http://www.unfpa.org/publications/detail.cfm?ID=304&filterListType=
Send to us by IAW secretary Alison Brown

**Human Rights Council** on: http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/
- Human Rights Council, 2nd session, 18 September - 6 October
- Human Rights Council, 3rd session, 27 November - 8 December
- Human Rights Council, 4th session, 12 March - 6 April

**International Days**
* International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition (23 August)
* United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012)
* International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)
* Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010)
* Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa (2001-2010)
* International Year of Deserts and Desertification (2006)

**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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International Women's News: Priscilla Todd <iaw.iwnews@womenalliance.org>
Membership Officer: Pat Richardson <iaw.membership@womenalliance.org>
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