

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

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

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales

IAW NEWSLETTER August 2008, no. 8



Equal Rights

Dear members,

In this newsletter procedures and campaigns for elections of UN experts. Campaigns for GEAR, CEDAW, CSW, the Human Rights Council, etc.

We have a look at the birth registration of children, with an estimate of 48 million children each year, without legal identity. Children are most vulnerable to the worldwide lack of sanitation. In the World Water Week in Stockholm, experts have been focusing on human suffering and economic loss of the world sanitation crisis.

Donors should live up to their promises to make aid more effective at fighting poverty, says the International Civil Society Steering Group, before the start of the Accra Conference.

Women are also in urgent need of funds for fighting poverty under MDG3. And a Muslim author, wife and mother, living in Britain, describes the challenge of living the Islamic faith in a secular democracy.

As usual you will find data on reports and events at the end of this newsletter.

UNITED NATIONS

Communications Procedure of the Commission on the Status of Women

Any individual, non-governmental organization, group or network may submit communications (complaints/appeals/petitions) to the Commission on the Status of Women containing information relating to alleged violations of human rights that affect the status of women in any country in the world.

The Commission on the Status of Women considers such communications as part of its annual programme of work in order to identify emerging trends and patterns of injustice and discriminatory practices against women for purposes of policy formulation and development of strategies for the promotion of gender equality.

Deadline approaching

Any person or organisation should write before August 26 2008. More information on:
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/communications_procedure.html#where

GEAR - August 2008:

[Former US President Bill Clinton Supports New UN Women's Agency!](#)

During a presentation at the International AIDS Conference, former US President Bill Clinton endorsed strengthening the UN system for women, called for the promotion of women's rights, and for an end to gender-based violence.

The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign

On February 16 2006, the UN Secretary-General created a new High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the areas of **development, humanitarian assistance** and the **environment**.

The final report was submitted to Kofi Annan in November 2006, which included extensive recommendations on consolidating UN operations, but it was not formally considered by the General Assembly (GA) until April 2007 when the new Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, issued his own response to the Panel's findings. [\[i\]](#)

Gender and Women's Rights had not been included

Gender and women's rights issues had not been included among the Panel's responsibilities until national and international women's groups lobbied Kofi Annan about the effectiveness of the current gender architecture.

What is the GEAR campaign?

Led by the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) and the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), "a stronger women's entity at the UN is the focus of this campaign. [An](#) advocacy campaign has continued since 2006. It has become more organised, signing up over 270 women's organisations and networks, and officially launched as the Gender Equality Architecture Reform or GEAR campaign in February 2008 during the 52nd session of the CSW. [\[iv\]](#)

General Assembly

All Member States have acknowledged the importance of gender equality and the need for implementing gender-related policies, but they disagree on implementing the specific actions recommended by the Panel.

The three institutional options proposed by the Secretary-General entail consolidation of UNIFEM, OSAGI, DAW and INSTRAW, and are: a single autonomous fund/programme; a department of the Secretariat; or a composite entity. [\[xii\]](#).

It is expected that the GA 2008 will consider the options and eventually make a decision. How long this will take is unknown.

GEAR - Latest news on: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/policy/unadvocacy/gea.html>

IAW representative at the UN: Kay Fraleigh

CEDAW

July 30, 2008 - States' parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) convened at United Nations headquarters in New York to elect new members to the 23-member CEDAW Committee. Nineteen nominees vied for eleven vacancies.

In a secret ballot, private citizens from Cuba, India, France, Finland, China, Brazil, Romania, Jamaica, Kenya, Spain and Afghanistan were selected to fill the slots.

Is CEDAW becoming too radical?

Prior to this week's election, a survey of the committee revealed that half of the CEDAW committee members are direct employees of such radical non-governmental organizations as the Latin America and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights, the International Council of Women, the Global Fund for Women and the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW).

After campaigning for pro-abortion members, Silvia Pimentel of Brazil will continue on for another four years.

During the last CEDAW committee session alone, Pimentel questioned a number of states on the abortion laws, pushed wider access to contraception, pressed Finland on "women of sexual minorities' access to health services," took issue with Slovakia's concordat with the Holy See that protects the right of health care workers to conscientiously object to taking part in abortions, and complained that heterosexual marriage perpetuated the stereotype of women as child bearers.

Next meeting - October 2008

The CEDAW Committee will next meet again in Geneva in October to review the reports from Bahrain, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Mongolia, Myanmar, Portugal, Slovenia and Uruguay.

The new 11 members will fill the vacancies that expire in December and will serve a four-year term beginning January 2009. Other members on the CEDAW Committee include individuals from Bangladesh, Algeria, Thailand, Ghana, Netherlands, Egypt, Israel, Slovenia, Mauritius, Japan and Croatia.

Summary from an article by Samantha Singson, sent to us by Hélène Sackstein, IAW representative at the Human Rights Council.

Human Rights Council - Score One for the NGOs

In two recent elections for the Human Rights Council, an NGO coalition successfully influenced the election in such a way that NGOs convinced governments not to support two candidates who they felt had failed to uphold human rights. According to the author, the success of these NGOs shows how much NGOs can achieve by persuading democratic countries in the developing world to stand up for human rights. It also showed that a more credible UN human right system can be established through bringing more participation of civil society organizations to the decision-making processes of the Human Rights Council. *Washington Post*, Ted Piccone, on:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/04/AR2008070402281.html>

IAW representative at the Human Rights Council, Hélène Sackstein

Geneva-based UN human rights advisory body winds up first session

15 August 2008 – After making recommendations on the rights of refugees and on the right to food, the United Nations Human Rights Council's Advisory Committee concluded its first session in Geneva.

Among the 13 recommendations adopted by consensus, the Advisory Committee suggested that the [Human Rights Council](#) and the Secretary-General use their good offices to extend the right of non-repression to hunger refugees – which would protect them from being sent back to their home countries against their will.

In addition, the Committee set up a working group charged with making recommendations on the right to the food and the current global food crisis, and another group to prepare a declaration on human rights education and training. The 18-member Advisory Committee will hold its second session from 26 to 30 January 2009.

More on: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27718&Cr=HRC&Cr1=>

IAW representative at the Human Rights Council: H el ene Sackstein

AROUND THE WORLD

Without concrete Commitments, Accra Outcome will be an Agenda for Inaction

On 2-4 September 2008, representatives of donors, multilateral agencies and developing country governments will meet in Accra (Ghana) for the Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF). Hundreds of civil society activists from around the world will also be in Accra, to make sure that donors live up to their promises to make aid more effective at fighting poverty.

This document outlines some of the key CSO critiques and concerns about the latest draft of the '[Accra Agenda for Action](#)' (the negotiated outcome document of the HLF) and its implementation, as well as some specific recommendations for the HLF.

International Civil Society Steering Group, 11 August 2008, on:

http://www.betteraid.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=88&Itemid=26

Courting History: The Landmark International Criminal Court's First Years

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (UN Doc. A/CONF.183/9, 17 July 1998) entered into force on 1 July 2002.

In this report reviewing the first years of the ICC's work, Human Rights Watch makes a number of recommendations aimed at helping to improve the fairness and effectiveness of ICC operations and to help the Court more pro-actively engage with affected communities to make its work meaningful and relevant to them.

Human Rights Watch, July 2008, on: <http://hrw.org/reports/2008/icc0708/>

Convenor of the IAW Commission on Justice: Margret Steinarsdottir

The Girl Child

Birth Registration and Armed Conflict

Birth registration is defined as the official record of a child's birth by the administration of the State. It establishes a child's legal identity.

According to recent estimates, 36% of all births are not registered, leaving more than 48 million children each year without legal identity. The majority of countries with less than 40% of children registered are war-affected or heavily indebted poor countries, or both. It is no coincidence that unregistered children are likely to be the ones most at risk when conflict occurs.

On: http://www.unicef.at/fileadmin/medien/pdf/birth_registration_and_armed_conflict.pdf

World Water Week, Stockholm

The World Water Week in Stockholm , 17-23 August 2008, opens *with a special focus on the world sanitation crisis*. The consequences of the crisis in terms of human suffering and economic loss are enormous.

Almost 2 million children under 5 die from diarrhoea each year. Millions of girls drop out of school because there are no toilets there for them. Every day around the world, many millions of productive people cannot work because they either have diarrhoea or are caring for somebody with diarrhoea. Human faeces mess up the environment and pollute drinking water supplies.

To work for solutions to the crisis, thousands of experts will meet in the Swedish capital, and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) will be there.

The 2008 World Water Week in Stockholm involves over 90 different plenary sessions, workshops, seminars, side events, panels, social events, field visits and prize award seminars.
You will find the Programme on <http://www.worldwaterweek.org/Downloads/2007/Overview.pdf>

From IAW Affiliate the Greek League of Women's Rights

Legal Matters: Elia Kolokytha discussed a decision of the First Instance Court of Rodopi. According to this decision the hereditary rights of muslim Greek should not be governed by muslim law, which violates fundamental human rights of women, but by Greek civil law.

Maria Stratigaki, member of the Greek delegation of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) writes about the theme and campaign of the **EWL: 'Who cares'**.

This was the main topic of a convention organised in Athens by the Greek delegation of the EWL and the NGO 'Initiative Women and Health'.

Two members of the Greek League took part at this convention and came forward with concrete recommendations regarding measures that could facilitate the reconciliation of the family, personal and professional life. The public policies on this subject were also examined.

From the excellent journal of the Greek League of Women's Rights

MDG3 Fund - Promote gender equality and empower women - Netherlands

In June last year the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs took the initiative to launch the MDG3 fund and invest 50 million Euro in gender equality and women's rights. Nearly six months later the fund has received overwhelming interest from organisations worldwide, showing again the great demand for funds for gender justice.

The fund came after a second critical review of AWID, showing that the financial capacity of women's organisations worldwide is not matching that of other development areas and is only very slowly showing any increase, if at all. The MDG3 Fund was meant to give a one time financial injection into women's organisations and funds, together with partners Mama Cash, Hivos, Cordaid, WPF, ICCO, and WO=MEN.

The fund exceeded all expectations

The interest in the MDG3 Fund has exceeded all expectations. A total of 440 applications have been received from 81 countries.

Northern based organisations have submitted about a hundred applications and about three hundred are from the South. The total amount was approximately € 700 million. There was so much enthusiasm for the Fund that the € 50 million budget available was over-subscribed fourteen times.

A threshold

Based on the minimal threshold of 750.000 a maximum of 67 organisations of all applicants would be eligible for funds from the MDG3 fund.

More than hundred proposals did not meet the threshold criteria of the required 750.000 euro.

Something that had in fact been predicted by some of the civil society partners, claiming that this threshold would be much too high for most women's organisations to cope with. At this moment around 240 proposals will be rejected.

MDG3 - Urgent financial need

Only a 150 to 200 proposals will actually be assessed. The grant committee consists of Foreign Affairs officials and two external gender experts who will determine the lucky few.

Others may be referred to the civil society partners of the MDG3 fund to see if possibilities exist within their structural funding programmes for gender equality, which would be a positive outcome of the overwhelming interest.

Being rejected by any fund is always a disappointing experience for those who have invested their time and efforts. However, the disproportional amount requested also shows the need and urgency for more funds, especially of a structural kind, to become available to support women's organisations and gender-specific projects and programmes.

Note: several small organisations wisely worked together to meet the threshold.

United Kingdom: Social Enterprise: Making it Work for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women identifies new ways to progress forward in encouraging and supporting BAME women into starting social enterprises. These include:

Creating resources to signpost women to key sources of advice and funding;

Developing a bank of case studies of BAME women social entrepreneurs;

Identifying ways to disseminate information on social enterprises to BAME women;
Considering how women's centres and children's centres could provide a space for BAME women together to share their experiences and create their own networks.

The report is to be found on <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/research/index.htm>

A summary, sent to us by IAW member Helen Self

Behind the veil: the online diary of a British Muslim woman

Na'ima B. Robert is a Muslim author, a wife and mother living in Britain. In the first of her regular articles for Faith Online she discusses the challenge of living the Islamic faith in a secular democracy. As a Muslim woman living in the embrace of a vibrantly secular, liberal democratic society, you are constantly caught between two very different worlds.

On the one hand, there is your faith, Islam, a religion and way of life revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) over 1400 years ago, a religion that affects the way you think, the way you act, the way you speak, dress and eat. It is the world of worship and sacrifice, of duties and voluntary charity. It is the world of faith.

Then, on the other hand, there is the dunya, the "worldly life", where you live, work, study, shop, entertain and unwind. It is a world of trends and societal pressures, deadlines and promotions, summer sales and summer holidays.

It is, in a nutshell, the world that almost everyone else lives in full-time.

And, interestingly enough, it is one that many non-Muslims are surprised that religious Muslim women inhabit at all. Despite the number of observant Muslim women active in public life in Britain, media representations often fail to be anything more than stereotypes with subtle and not-so-subtle messages that Muslim women are oppressed, powerless, ghettoised, uneducated, devoid of ambition, with an unhealthy addiction to black clothes.

That is the only way I can explain the surprised reaction to the findings of a survey of Muslim women carried out by [SISTERS](#) Magazine and Ummah Foods. To some it apparently came as a revelation that Muslim women long for their soul mate and shop on the high street, that we too go out to eat and dream of running our own businesses one day.

This surprise struck me as puzzling. Where did people think we got our clothes from, if not shops like Hennes and Next, Monsoon and Zara? Or maybe they thought that, beneath our hijabs, jilbabs and niqabs, we simply wear more of the same: shapeless sack dresses and bloomers, stitched at home by hand.

What of the hijabi fashionistas, the undercover style queens, the ladies-only parties with beaded evening dresses and glitter hair gems? If nothing else, maybe the BBC television show Women in Black has shown audiences that there is indeed life beneath a black abayah.

Do people really think that all Muslim women are victims of forced or 'arranged marriages' who live lives of dutiful obedience and loveless servitude with men who treat them like slaves?

How surprised people would be to learn of the 'halal romance', the deep love and affection felt by many Muslim couples, the years of companionship and support and, of course, numerous babies, that accompany many Muslim marriages. And, of course, even fewer know about the liberal attitude to marital intimacy that is to be found in the books of hadith and Islamic jurisprudence. But that is another story...

It is tricky sometimes, straddling the divide, and it requires a great deal of balance, patience and compromise. But we wouldn't have it any other way. By choosing to practise Islam in the UK, this is what we have chosen: to have a foot in both camps and, hopefully, experience the best of both worlds, whatever those worlds may be.

Copyright: Na'ima B. Robert who is the editor of [SISTERS](#) magazine for Muslim women, and the author of [From My Sisters' Lips](#); [From Somalia with Love](#); [The Swirling Hijab](#); [My Around the World Scrapbook](#)

On: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article4400089.ece>

Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

EVENTS - CONFERENCES - REPORTS - LINKS

September 16 - Opening of the 63rd session of the General Assembly. The general debate will take place from 23 September to 1st October 2008. On: >> Plenary meetings of the 63rd session Documents at: <http://www.un.org/ga/62/agenda/issues.shtml>

September 25 2008 - High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals at UN Headquarters in New York. On: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/index.shtml>

Provisional Programme of the Security Council August 2008

On: <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/pow.pdf>

ECA: Economic Report on Africa 2008

The 2008 edition of the Economic Report on Africa is entitled 'Africa and the Monterrey Consensus: Tracking Africa's Progress'. It reviews economic progress and challenges for Africa and reviews progress in meeting the goals of the Monterrey Consensus. On: <http://www.uneca.org/era2008/>

Women's Voices in Europe:

Promoting Gender Equality through Lobbying and Policy influencing in Europe
Monday, 15 September 2008 - Amnesty Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, EC2A, 10-14 AM,
info@nawo.org.uk 3EA, London

About the Universal Periodic Review – UPR

Submissions in relation to the 16 countries scheduled to be reviewed at the **fourth session** of the Working Group on the UPR (2 - 13 February 2009) should be sent to the above-indicated address by: 1 September 2008 for submissions on Cameroon, Djibouti, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, Bangladesh, China and Jordan; and 8 September 2008 for submissions on Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Mexico, Canada, Germany, Russian Federation and Azerbaijan.

[60 Years of United Nations Peacekeeping, 1948 - 2008](#)

■ [International Year of Languages 2008](#)

■ [International Year of Sanitation 2008](#)

■ [60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

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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