Dear IAW members,

Violence against women and girls, health, education, water and sanitation, food and the environment, the UN, all these issues were brought forward and discussed by the IAW convenors and presidents of IAW Affiliates, during the Board meeting in Paris. A lot of good work has been done! You will find the latest news on those issues in this newsletter, some of them enveloped in a political coat. There is one result we like to mention in particular. The board decided that IAW will join IANSA’s Women’s Network in London and also the NGO Working Group on Resolution 1325.

ACTION TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS GAINS MOMENTUM

Every day, women all over the world are abducted into forced marriage; subjected to harmful traditional practices; married, while still children, to far older men; and injured through gang rape and rape with foreign objects—usually during conflict.

Every year, the plight of these women is too often ignored, consigned to the back pages of newspapers or relegated to no more than a passing mention in mainstream broadcast media—if at all.

To kick off the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is highlighting five under-reported stories relating to gender-based violence for 2006. These stories are as hidden as they are diverse. They include:

The rising tide of ‘bridenapping’—the abduction, rape and forced marriage of young women throughout Central Asia;

Breast-ironing, a traditional practice in a number of West African countries that involves crushing the breasts of young girls in order to deter male attention;

The epidemic of traumatic fistula in Africa, which is caused by gang rape and often the forced insertion of foreign objects into the rape victim. This results in the tearing of the delicate tissues separating the birth canal from the bowel and/or the bladder. Seriously injured and psychologically traumatized, the victim is left incontinent, leaking faeces, urine, or both. Too often, her family and community rejects her, to live out the remainder of her life as a pariah—doubly stigmatized—both by the rape itself and its terrible consequences.

The ongoing femicide of women in the Central American country of Guatemala. Unlike the killings of young women in Ciudad Juarez, on the El Paso/Mexico border, the wholesale murder and mutilation of Guatemala’s women continues to be enacted under a cloak of media silence and official neglect.

Child marriage—the forced marriage of girl children—most often against their will-to (usually) older men. Most of these marriages take place in the world’s poorest nations and mean that girls are unable to complete their education; are at greater risk of being exploited, of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and of dying or being injured in childbirth owing to the fact that their bodies are too immature to withstand the rigours of birth.

Five stories on gender-based violence on: www.unfpa.org

The United Nations Population Fund is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity.
UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

UNFPA has cited a whole raft of issues to tackle in response to gender-based violence and has proposed a range of steps from greater overall publicity and an end to silence over spousal abuse, to pushing for legislative reform and providing safe havens for girls escaping coerced marriages.

More on [http://www.unfpa.org/16days/index.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/16days/index.htm) and also on UNNews@un.org.

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**AFRICAN COUNTRIES pledged to fight violence against women in UN-backed campaign**

Twenty-two African countries have recommitted themselves to ending violence against women and children as part of a United Nations-backed 16-day-long campaign against the scourge.

Some 170 participants at a colloquium in Benoni, South Africa, pledged to take up the challenge issued by UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Country Representative Macharia Kamau "to work together to build partnerships, establish a common vision and take common action" to end violence against women and children in their respective countries.

The five-day meeting, which ended yesterday, was hosted by the Government of South Africa in partnership with UNICEF and the Government of Denmark. UN agencies around the world are teaming up with rights organizations in the campaign, 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women, with various activities and awareness-raising programmes.

More on [http://www.unicef.org/media/media_36779.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_36779.html)

**Just say no to exploitation, UN anti-crime chief says**

From the sex trade to underpaid maids to sweatshops, the chief United Nations crime fighter is calling for concrete steps to reduce the lures and increase the risks of human trafficking.

Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa urged UN Member States to ensure that a major conference on human trafficking in Abu Dhabi in March produces concrete results to help end the trade in human beings. Around 1,000 representatives from government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other bodies will attend what is expected to be the largest-ever conference on human trafficking.

_The Government of the United Arab Emirates will host the Abu Dhabi Global Initiative to End Trafficking in Persons from 26-28 March 2007, with UNODC the support._

“There have been conferences that have changed the world’s views on development assistance, the conditions of women, or the danger of the AIDS pandemic. So I urge you to attend and propose concrete initiatives to make the Abu Dhabi meeting the anti-slavery counterpart of these successful events.” Among the expected outcomes is the establishment of a clearing-house for internationally comparable data on trafficking in persons. “At the moment we all are in a statistical fog,” Mr. Costa said.

The website of UNDOC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) is to be found on: [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/press_release_2006_12_01.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/press_release_2006_12_01.html)

**Defending rape survivors - Three tools**

Rape survivors, at least 50% of women seeking asylum, face unprecedented obstacles in pursuing their asylum claims. Black Women's Rape Action Project and Women Against Rape, in collaboration with All African Women's Group and Legal Action for Women, have launched three tools for rape survivors, legal representatives and all those concerned with human rights:

* **Misjudging rape** - A Dossier of how adjudicators flout international law and even their own guidelines when they consider the asylum claims of women and girls seeking safety and protection from rape;

* **Claiming asylum from rape** - A Rights Sheet; and

* **Asylum from Rape Petition** - calling on the government to officially recognise rape as torture and persecution and therefore grounds for asylum, and to end the detention and deportation of rape
survivors and their families. More info: Black Women's Rape Action, Project bwrap@dircon.co.uk - Women Against Rape; war@womenagainstrape.net

HEALTH - EDUCATION - WATER - SANITATION - FOOD

Gates Foundation grants UN refugee agency $10 million for relief work in South Sudan
1 December 2006 – The United Nations refugee agency today announced a $10-million emergency relief grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for health, education, water and sanitation projects to re-integrate hundreds of thousands of Sudanese uprooted by 21 years of civil war in the south of the vast country.

These projects will help returnees and communities in South Sudan bridge the difficult gap between repatriation, reconstruction and long-term development,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) António Guterres said in a statement. “Equipping communities early on with basic essentials such as clean water and sanitation, schools and health care helps ensure that those who are going home can stay home.”

Sudanese Refugees
There are still 350,000 Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries waiting to go home to the south, and an estimated 4 million internally displaced persons in Sudan itself, since a peace agreement between the Government and rebels was concluded nearly two years ago.

The new grant will cover immediate needs over a 28-month period in three main sectors – basic health care, education, and water and sanitation – in Western, Central and Eastern Equatorial states as well as the Upper Nile, UNHCR spokesman Ron Redmond told a news briefing in Geneva.

The UNHCR website is on:  http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/45700ba42.html

UN food agency teams up with Islamic relief group to boost aid for poor and hungry
The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) signed an agreement with the international Islamic aid organization, Islamic Relief Worldwide, to increase cooperation on vital feeding programmes for the poor regardless of colour or creed, both for immediate emergency relief and longer-term initiatives.

“This is a team that can make a real difference to the lives of millions of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world,” WFP Executive Director James Morris said. “For many years, WFP has worked alongside Islamic Relief in crises as diverse as the Pakistan earthquake and the conflict in the Darfur region of western Sudan. Strengthening our relationship in this way is the logical next step.”

The partnership will aid the poor and the hungry irrespective of religion but it recognizes that the majority of WFP beneficiaries are from the Muslim world. On average, WFP feeds around 90 million people a year and more than half of these come from Muslim communities.

“Whether it is in Sudan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, or the occupied Palestinian territory, we rely heavily on our colleagues in organizations like Islamic Relief because of their strong contacts in the Muslim world,” Mr. Morris said. “As we learned in Lebanon, when the conflict [with Israel] erupted this summer, it is important to have allegiances like this to ensure we can deliver aid quickly and effectively to those who need it most.”

See also: http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=31

Harvesting rainfall a key climate adaptation opportunity for Africa
African countries suffering or facing water shortages as a result of climate change have a massive potential in rainwater harvesting, with nations like Ethiopia and Kenya capable of meeting the needs of six to seven times their current populations, according to a United Nations report released today.

“The figures are astonishing and will surprise many,” UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Achim Steiner said of the study, compiled by his agency and the World Agroforestry Centre, which urges governments and donors to invest more widely in a technology that is low cost, simple to deploy and maintain, and able to transform the lives of households, communities and countries Africa-wide.

Overall the quantity of rain falling across the continent is equivalent to the needs of 9 billion people, one and half times the current global population. About a third of Africa is deemed suitable for rainwater harvesting if a threshold of 200 millimetres of arrival rainfall, considered to be at the lower end of the scale, is used.
Although not all rainfall can or should be harvested for drinking and agricultural uses, with over a third needed to sustain the wider environment including forests, grasslands and healthy river flows, the harvesting potential is still much more than adequate to meet a significant slice of human needs, the report notes.

The report mapped the rainwater harvesting potential of nine countries in Africa – Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Kenya, with a population of somewhere under 40 million people, has enough rainfall to supply the needs of six to seven times its current population, according to the study. Ethiopia, where just over a fifth of the population is covered by domestic water supply and an estimated 46 per cent of the population suffer hunger, has a potential rainwater harvest equivalent to the needs of over 520 million people.

The report is to be found on: http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/LSGZ-6VHKED?OpenDocument&rc=1&emid=ACOS-635NZE

Rising tide of electronic waste
27 November 2006 – Developing countries are bearing the brunt of a rising global tide of electronic waste, from obsolete computers and televisions to defunct mobile phones, the top United Nations environmental official warned today as he called for concerted action to tackle the problem.

In a speech in Nairobi to the opening of a week-long conference on the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Achim Steiner said the products being discarded carry a wide range of dangerous pollutants, from heavy metals to chlorine compounds.

He cited a recent article which showed that at least 100,000 computers are arriving in the port of Lagos, the Nigerian commercial capital, every month.

“If these were good quality, second-hand pieces of equipment, this would perhaps be a positive trade of importance for development,” he said. “But local experts estimate between a quarter to 75 per cent of these items... are defunct.”

Some 120 governments were participants in the week-long conference, which is the eighth of its kind to deal with the Basel Convention. United Nations Environment Programme on: http://www.unep.org/

WOMEN AND POLITICS

NEW YORK - U.N. Passes Arms Trade Treaty Over U.S. Opposition
United Nations member states voted on October the 26th to create an international treaty to curb the illicit trade in guns and other light weapons, despite strong opposition from the United States and other big powers.

A vast majority of delegates to the U.N. General Assembly's first committee endorsed the resolution calling for the establishment of a treaty to stop weapons transfers that fuel conflict, poverty and serious human rights violations.

As many as 139 countries voted in favour of the resolution while 24 abstained. The United States, the world's largest supplier of small arms, was the only country that opposed the resolution. Other major arms-manufacturing nations that oppose the treaty but did not participate in the voting include Russia, China, India and Pakistan.

The vote came after three years of complex diplomatic negotiations and a worldwide campaign by civil society groups that involved more than one million people in 170 countries.

The current volume of the global arms trade is estimated to be around 1.1 trillion dollars, an amount that is likely to increase further by the end of this year, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the United States accounted for 48 percent of total military spending worldwide in 2005.

"A thousand people die every day and many more harmed as a result of the proliferation and misuse of small arms,” said Rebecca Peters, the director of IANSA, the International Action Network on Small Arms. “The world can no longer leave civilians to the mercy of gunrunners and arms brokers who are profiting every year,” she added in a statement, calling for a worldwide ban on the use and supply
of illicit weapons.
The resolution, which was sponsored by Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and Britain, calls for the establishment of a group of experts to look at the feasibility, scope and parameters of the treaty, which must report back to the first committee by the fall of 2008.
Article by Haider Rizvi, http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=35267

Editors Note: at the IAW Board Meeting, Paris 12th-13th November 2006, the following motion was accepted: that IAW join with -
(a) IANSA's Women's Network in London.
(b) Join the NGO Working Group on Resolution 1325 at the UN in New York.

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's parliament approved amendments to an Islamic-based law on rape, dropping the death penalty and flogging for people convicted of having consensual sex outside marriage, officials said.
The changes, which must still be approved by the government-controlled Senate, also gave judges discretion to try rape cases in a criminal rather than Islamic court, where victims have to present at least four witnesses for a conviction.
The amendments disappointed human rights activists who wanted the law, known as the Hudood Ordinance, to be scrapped altogether. The law has made prosecuting rape cases almost impossible, while women who press charges risk being charged with adultery.
Under the changes, consensual sex outside of marriage would be punishable by five years in jail or a fine, said a parliamentary official.
Islamists stormed out of the parliament to protest the changes.
Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz told the assembly that the Protection of Women Bill marked "a historic day" for the country. "Nothing is against Islam in this bill," Aziz said, adding that the amendments were made in consultation with Islamic scholars, lawmakers and human rights activists.
By Associated Press and mailed to us by IAW Member Anjana Basu.

VATICAN - After decades of opposition, Vatican view on condoms begins to shift
The Roman Catholic church has taken the first step towards what could be a historic shift away from its total ban on the use of condoms. Pope Benedict XVI's "health minister" is understood to be urging him to accept that in restricted circumstances - specifically the prevention of Aids - barrier contraception is the lesser of two evils.
The recommendations, which have not been made public, still have to be reviewed by the traditionally conservative Vatican department responsible for safeguarding theological orthodoxy, and then by the Pope himself, before any decision is made.
The rethink, commissioned by Pope Benedict following his election last year, could save millions of lives around the world. It is likely to be raised today when the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has his first full discussion with the Pope at an audience in the Vatican.

NEW DELHI - Impasse on women’s quota
The women’s reservation bill is unlikely to be introduced in Parliament’s winter session as ruling coalition allies still have “serious” reservations despite the Prime Minister’s repeated assertions on passing the legislation.
“I feel introduction (of the bill) will be possible only after another round of talks,” said parliamentary affairs minister Priya Ranjan Das Munshi. “There is no problem with introducing it for the third time. But a bill should be brought only if we are certain of its passage. If we introduce this bill, it will be sent again to a standing committee. The women’s bill is not another simple bill. It requires a constitutional amendment, which needs the vote of two-thirds of the House.”
Das Munshi said that for the Congress, the base line was “33 per cent” reservation and no less.
It is believed that the BJP indicated to the government that it was looking at alternatives, such as adopting the Election Commission’s proposal to leave it to individual parties to reserve seats for women, while distributing tickets in elections.
The contentious bill on quotas for the other backward classes in unaided institutions and private deemed universities is also unlikely to be tabled this session.
Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu.
ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE and NGOs
The United Nations Non-governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) in cooperation with the following two NGOs: Stakeholder Forum and the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development (FBOMs) are asking for civil society views on the Report of the High Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence which was released on 9 November 2006. Organisations interested in making submissions and participating in the second compilation of civil society views on system-wide coherence should send contributions to Jennifer Peer jpeer@stakeholderforum.org before 20 December. More on: http://www.stakeholderforum.org/ieg_home.html

UN Report: Penalising Victims of Prostitution and Trafficking
The UN report states that laws and policies that penalise victims of prostitution and trafficking should be condemned, measures to address demand should ensure that victims of trafficking are neither criminalized nor subjected to punitive measures and it recommends the criminalising of the use of prostituted persons.
More information on: http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/trafficking/annual.htm

Manual on tropical diseases
On the 26th of October the – The United Nations health agency today joined with 25 partner organizations to unveil a new strategy using low-cost or free drugs to fight some of the most neglected tropical diseases caused by worm infections that threaten the lives and health of billions of poor people in developing countries around the world.
The approach contained in a newly published manual, Preventive Chemotherapy in Human Helminthiasis, focuses on using a set of low-cost or free drugs to simultaneously treat the four most common diseases caused by worms and afflicting over 1 billion people: river blindness (onchocerciasis), elephantiasis (lymphatic filariasis), schistosomiasis, and soil-transmitted helminthiasis. The cost: as low as 40 cents per person per year.Manual on: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2006/pr60/en/index.html

Grants Programme to reduce Tobacco Use
The Bloomberg Global Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use has been launched with funds from Michael R. Bloomberg. As part of the Initiative, a competitively awarded grants program will support projects to develop and deliver high-impact tobacco control interventions in low and middle-income countries. The grants program is being managed by the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.
For further information about the grants program, including the Call for Proposals and instructions on how to apply for a grant, visit www.tobaccocontrolgrants.org

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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