INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities Droits Égaux - Responsibilités Égales

IAW NEWSLETTER - June, nr. 5

Dear IAW members.



Editing means also cutting out or reducing subjects to keep the flow of international news in hand. We did not do so with the two priority issues of CSW 2003 - ICT and Violence. ICT gives the women's movement just that uplift in cyberspace necessary for intensive networking and fighting violence against women is at the core of our fight for Human Rights. Other articles in this newsletter include news of the struggle of women for gender equality in Afghanistan, a possible remedy to prevent getting HIV/AIDS. The cruel mutilation of girls by circumcision can now be debated in the open instead of in dark back rooms, CEDAW is going as strong as ever, in particular with the excellent report from Odense at hand, women are working hard to influence the outcome of WSSD in Johannesburg and IAW is preparing for her 32nd Congress from 14-22 September 2002 in Sri Lanka.

The final article is a cry of outrage from the FAO because 800 million people still go hungry in a world marked by affluence.

Women on the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Bali

Women voice their hopes in a document called "Women's Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy Planet 2015", a blueprint of their dreams and goals for sustainable, gender-sensitive, people-centred development. Women, according to a report prepared by the Women's Environment and Development Organisation, demand that governments stop various violent actions, which are incompatible with sustainable development.

They urged governments to promote the universal ratification and implementation without reservation of the **International Criminal Court**, emphasising the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, including those relating to sexual and other violence against women. In the economic sector, women also criticised the unfair distribution of prosperity.

The current economic system perpetuates inequitable distribution of wealth and the means of production, skewed power relations, over-consumption and irresponsible use of natural common resources. **Privatisation** has deprived women of essential services formerly provided by the state. Thus women bear the impact on multiple levels - juggling more work and household tasks with less income and less access to land. The women urged the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation to work with the United Nations to set goals and timetables for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions to at least 30 percent and to mainstream gender perspectives in all institutional programs. They also called for all states to implement the provisions of **CEDAW**, including the adoption of gender equality legislation that guarantees women equal rights to own, manage, inherit and control land, and to access credit and appropriate technology.

Access to **health and education** must be widely opened. Women's human rights and economic security are unattainable without accessible and affordable basic health and reproductive health services.

See also: http://www.johannesburgsummit.org

Advance Preparations for CSW 2003

Meeting on ICT - Republic of Korea - early November 2003

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in co-operation with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the United Nations ICT Task Force Secretariat, is organising an expert group meeting (EGM) on "Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women". The Korea

meeting will consider the impact of ICT on women and its use as a tool for the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality. In particular, it will examine ICT as a tool for women's economic empowerment, for enhancing women's participation in public life, and for strengthening women's capabilities in the area of education and health. It will address the challenges and benefits women encounter with regard to ICT and explore ways to close the gender-based digital divide. It will develop policy recommendations and concrete actions to be taken at national, regional and international levels and, by a variety of actors, that aim at securing the full benefit of ICT in pursuit of gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women. ICT is a priority topic of CSW 2003.

On-line Discussion

In preparation for the meeting, an on-line discussion on all these aspect of ICT is running from 17 June to 19 July 2002. The results of the on-line discussion will be presented to the EGM in the Republic of Korea.

See the DAW website: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/

Violence against Women

Christina Saunders, Assistant to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, writes: Please find below a request for information from Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (SRVAW), in the context of the preparation of her final report to the 59th session of the Commission on Human Rights prior to completing her term of office in 2003.

I like to inform you that will complete her term of office as Special Rapporteur on violence against women in 2003. The report will evaluate how effective the mechanism has been. It will be divided into different geopolitical regions, and will contain an analysis of how states have implemented all of her previous recommendations, including those contained in mission reports, to give an overview of the progress made in eliminating violence against women since 1994. The report will focus on a review of developments during the last 10 years (1994- 2003) in the following areas covered by the mandate.

- 1. Violence against women in the family (eg domestic violence, traditional practices.)
- 2. Violence against women in the community (eg rape, sexual harassment, trafficking)
- 3. Violence against women perpetrated or condoned by the state (eg. violence against women in detention and custodial violence, violence against women in situations of armed conflict.)

Therefore we would like to request your kind assistance in preparing an analysis (maximum 5 pages per country) of how recommendations, made by the Special Rapporteur, to eliminate gender-based violence, in regards to the three areas above, have been implemented by states and areas where there is still need for action. For example, it would be useful to include relevant country information on: the current status of ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, its Optional Protocol and other relevant international instruments. Please mention whether States when reporting to CEDAW or other committees have referred to the work/recommendations of the Special Rapporteur. Any regional or national initiatives to strengthen the legislative and policy framework to prevent, eliminate and prosecute violence against women. Any executive policies or plans of action that attempt to deal with the question of violence against women. Any relevant constitutional amendments that have been enacted. Is there constitutional authority guaranteeing equality for women or the prohibition of violence against women? Any relevant legislation that has been passed/amended in accordance with international standards.

- Has the Special Rapporteur's framework for model domestic violence legislation been used?
- Is there national legislation and/or administrative sanctions providing adequate redress for women victims of violence? Any specific directives with regard to the development of legal and administrative mechanisms to ensure effective justice for victims of violence.
- Is the criminal justice system sensitive to the issues of violence against women? In this regard, what is police practice? How many cases are investigated by the police? How are victims dealt with by the police? How many cases are prosecuted? What type of judgements are given in such cases? Are the health professionals who assist the prosecution sensitive to issues of violence against women?
 - Is there gender training for the criminal justice system to ensure the appropriate handling of cases of violence against women? Any important court cases?
- Any statistical data on the incidence of gender-based violence? Any support services for women victims of violence. Do women who are victims of violence have support services such as shelters, legal and psychological counselling, specialised assistance and rehabilitation provided either by the Government or by non-governmental organisations. Have appropriate measures been taken in the field of education and the media to raise awareness of violence against women as a human rights violation and to modify practices that discriminate against women?
- Please give examples of how the Special Rapporteur on violence against women mechanism has been successfully used at the regional/national level in efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

Where appropriate please include country specific factors and difficulties facing implementation of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations and principal areas of concern and recommendations for future action to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

Please kindly note that as well as a global analysis of the current situation regarding the elimination of violence against women, the Special Rapporteur will follow up on all of her fact-finding missions since 1994 (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan; Poland; Brazil; South Africa; Rwanda; USA; Indonesia and East Timor; Cuba; Haiti; Afghanistan; Bangladesh, Nepal and India; Sierra Leone and Colombia.) We welcome any up to date information/analysis(maximum 3 pages per country) in regards to the state of implementation of her specific recommendations to the countries named above.

Any information, recommendations or comments you can provide will contribute significantly to the preparation of the Special Rapporteur's report to the Commission on Human Rights. Information would be greatly appreciated at your earliest possible convenience, and at the latest by 1 August 2002, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Office at Geneva. If possible please send all contributions by Email to csaunders.hchr@unog.ch which will greatly facilitate the processing of data for the report.

More information about the mechanism and all of the Special Rapporteur's reports can be found on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights website: http://www.unhchr.ch/women/focus-violence.html

If you need any further information about the Special Rapporteur's progress report on the elimination of violence against women, including follow-up to fact finding missions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in advance for your much valued assistance.

With best regards,

Christina Saunders, Assistant to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences Activities and Programmes Branch,

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

UNOG-OHCHR CH-1210 Geneva 11, Switzerland

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

Report from CEDAW Conference in Odense, Denmark

In November 2001 the Danish Women's Society under the auspices of IAW hosted an international conference on CEDAW.

The report from the conference includes the talks given by all speakers, conclusions from group work and major conclusions reached at the end of the conference. And we have added a list of publications on mainstreaming, which we think might be useful in the work to promote women's rights. The report is on its way to all participants of the conference, to donors and to all members of the CEDAW Committee. Free copies of the report are available at The Danish Women's Society. If you are interested, e-mail kontor@kvindesamfund.dk

Editorial comment: we congratulate our Danish sisters on this excellent report.

CEDAW: Reports of Belgium, Republic of Congo, Denmark, St. Kitts & Nevis, Suriname, Tunisia, Ukraine and Zambia are to be found at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/27sess.htm

32nd IAW Congress Sri Lanka - New Frontiers for a New Age

Many delegates have already planned their travel to Colombo to attend Congress which will commence formally on the morning of 16 September 2002 with the Inauguration ceremonies. Delegates are invited to an informal get-together the evening before and registration will be open on 14 & 15 September. The week will be taken up with interesting topics, keynote addresses by experts, workshop discussions and will end with a day trip to Kandy. In short, a great programme! It's also an excellent opportunity for networking on subjects and goals you are aiming at as well as making new friends and greeting old friends..

NOTE: Accommodation is tight due to other large international events being held in Colombo during September so BOOK NOW with Manel Abeysekera. E.mail: colomboywca@webstation.lk and send your registration form later.

Information: IAW Hon. Secretary Ms Priscilla Todd, toddsec@netlink.com. au

Treasure's Request

If any Affiliate or Associate member organisation or Individual member has forgotten to pay the IAW contribution, please do so as soon as possible. The year 2002 is already halfway round and our Executive needs your ongoing financial support to keep the Alliance going at full steam. Please send. with your name and address, in convertible currency to the Hon. Treasurer Anje Wiersinga, Post Box 614, 3400 AP Zeist, Netherlands. (Annual subscriptions: Pounds sterling 60 for affiliates / 30 for associates / 10 for individuals).

NOTE: To attend Congress it is essential that you are financial – you may pay in Sri Lanka if this is more convenient.

INTERNATIONAL

Woman minister upsets closet Taliban

Powerful Islamic fundamentalists have launched a fierce attack on Sima Samar, the Minister of Women's Affairs, accusing her of blasphemy and demanding that she be given "appropriate punishment" which, under sharia law, means death.

The onslaught on Ms Samar, one of only two women ministers in President Hamid Karzai's interim government, is the high point in a surge of confidence by fundamentalists who have been allowed to dominate the grand tribal council, the loya jirga, in Kabul in the past few days.

The attack appeared in a front-page headline and half-page letter from "a reader in Kabul" to the editor of Mujahed (Soldier of God), a weekly newspaper. The letter, which was entitled "Afghanistan's Salman Rushdie?", claims Ms Samar told a Canadian newspaper in April: "I don't believe in sharia." Although sharia's relevance to the complexities of modern life is debated, every Muslim is expected to accept its principles. "In Afghanistan holy sharia still rules," the letter adds. "Our people know what punishment awaits anyone who insults Islam and the Prophet. We ask the judicial authorities to investigate Sima Samar for her insult and prepare the appropriate punishment."

Ms Samar reacted to the attack with outward calm on Monday. "They are threatening me. I'm here and it's fine, so what?" she said.

Months after a US-led military offensive toppled the Taliban, radical Islam lives on in Afghanistan. Kabul University is another example. New, US-educated administrators are trying to rebuild the nation's main university but the Taliban's extremist indoctrination and generations of conservative Islamic culture have left their mark. "There are a lot of closet Taliban," said Zahir Wahab, an adviser to Afghanistan's Minister of Higher Education. "It is by no means over, the struggle." By Jonathan Steele, Kabul, June 19, 2002, http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002

EDITORIAL "Australian Correspondent", an ABC TV programme of good repute, showed Afghan women still being beaten in the street when they dared to reveal some skin and commented that the majority of women continue to wear the burkha in the street. (Melbourne 26/6/02)

Conferences

17-28 June and 30 September – 11 October, Vienna, CICP: Ad Hoc Committee for the negotiation of a Convention against Corruption, 2nd and 3rd session.

17-28 June, New York, UNCITRAL: UN Commission on International Trade Law, 35th session. 9-11 July, UN New York: General Meeting Between the UN Systems and the organisation of the Islamic

Conferences and its Specialised Institutions.

APC Africa Hafkin Communications Prize in 2002

Deadline for nominations, September 15, 2002

Theme: People-Centred Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy in Africa The prize is open to: civil society organisations, government institutions, educational organisations, community-based groups, networks, social movements and individuals anywhere in Africa, looking for: people-centred and mobilise participation, raise awareness and build capacity, are Africa-driven and that develop Africa. The prize: USD\$7,500.00 will be shared amongst up to three winning initiatives. See: http://www.apc.org/english/hafkin/2002.shtml

Swiss Voters Lift Restriction On Abortion

Swiss voters agreed today to ease the country's abortion laws, among Europe's strictest, and bring them closer to much of the rest of the continent's laws and actual practice in Switzerland.

About 72 percent of voters approved a measure permitting abortions in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, provided the woman requests the procedure in writing and agrees to counseling and medical advice. After 12 weeks, a woman may obtain an abortion only if she can show a physician that her physical health is endangered or that she faces "profound distress." The Swiss vote leaves Ireland, Poland and Portugal with Europe's most restrictive abortion laws, according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a non-profit group that researches reproductive health.

The existing Swiss law, dating from 1942, had allowed pregnancies to be terminated only if the mother's health was at risk or in cases of rape. Medical doctors who terminated a pregnancy faced five years in prison, a steep sentence by Swiss standards, while the woman could be jailed for up to three years. But the last conviction under the law was in 1988, and an estimated 12,000 to 13,000 abortions are performed annually. Three previous attempts to change the law, in the 1970's and 80's, had failed.

Opponents

Abortion opponents had gathered enough signatures to place an alternative proposal on the ballot, which would have further tightened the law, prohibiting abortion even in cases of rape. But that plan was rejected, by 82 percent of voters.

Adapted from The New York Times; June 3, 2002

To view this article, go to: http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/03/international/europe/03SWIS.html

AIDS Prevention - Research

The conference, Microbicides 2002, held in Belgium in May, brought together about 600 people from 44 nations, all with a common goal: to create a substance that people can use vaginally or rectally to prevent the transmission of the HIV virus. Scientists are turning to some of the newest drugs in AIDS treatment in their quest for a novel method of prevention known as microbicides: spermicide-like gels that could help women protect themselves against AIDS. Propelled largely by advocates for women's health, the search for an effective microbicide is seen as a critical AIDS-prevention strategy in developing nations, where women are being infected with HIV at an alarming rate, in part because their partners refuse to wear condoms.

Figures

Although large pharmaceutical companies have largely stayed out of the field, fearing that a product aimed at poor women in developing countries will not pay off, advocates hope that stepped-up financial support from governments and foundations will "seed" a future global market for

microbicides, one they estimate at \$1.4 billion annually once a highly effective product is developed. In comparison, the global market for Viagra is estimated at \$1.5 billion annually.

The U.S. government will spend about \$48 million on microbicide research this year - less than 2 percent of the federal AIDS research budget. Advocates say at least twice that amount is needed yearly to bring a microbicide to market. More funding is coming: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in February announced a \$20 million grant for a microbicides research effort, and the British government is sponsoring a \$23 million microbicides project with South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon and Zambia.

San Jose Mercury News; June 2002. Global Campaign for Microbicides www.global-campaign.org

Aids Prevention - Special Education for Women only!

Female Cambodian lawmakers, aghast that legislation on AIDS prevention singles out women for special education, said that it was promiscuous Cambodian men who needed more information about the disease.

Cambodian men are notorious for frequenting brothels, even as the country's HIV/AIDS infection rate has climbed to one of the highest in Asia. An estimated 2.8 percent of Cambodian adults aged 15-49 have tested positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Officials estimate that some 70,000 Cambodians have died from AIDS in the past decade. The country has about 12 million people. As the National Assembly debated draft legislation on the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS, lawmaker Ly Kim Leang challenged part of the draft that called for "special education about HIV/AIDS disease for young girls and household women." She said it was unfair to Cambodian women who are being victimised by men's sexual behaviour. "It is them, not just women, who need to have more special education," she said.

Men, condoms and awareness

Last month, Cambodia's National HIV-AIDS Centre said its latest survey on men's sexual behaviour found that fewer men were visiting sex workers, and that those who did were using condoms more frequently.

Twenty percent of soldiers surveyed in 2001 said that they had visited a prostitute in the previous month, down from 47 percent in 1999. No survey was conducted in 2000. Among police officers, the figure dropped to 18.5 percent from 37 percent in the same time period. For motorbike taxi drivers, it fell to 8.5 percent from 34.5 percent. The Centre attributed the changes to its condom promotion campaign and increased awareness among men about the risks of having unprotected sex. *Associated Press*; June 4, 2002

Circumcision, a Third World Problem?

Until a few years ago, female circumcision was thought to be a Third World problem. But now, because of increased immigration, there has been a surge in Europe, especially in Italy, France, Britain and the Scandinavian countries. The problem surfaced in Italy four years ago when immigration laws were changed to make it easier for illegal immigrants who had found work in Italy to stay and to bring their families. Most often girls are circumcised when they are taken back to their parents' homeland to visit relatives. Less frequently, a doctor or some other practitioner from the homeland will be brought to Italy to secretly -and illegally - perform circumcisions on a number of girls. Al-Gadi, who lives in Rome, has a 4-year-old daughter who will be spared this painful and psychologically debilitating experience. Her husband, a former Somali university professor, supports the decision. Other girls living in Italy may not be so fortunate. Health authorities estimate that 40,000 women in this country, mainly immigrants from Africa, have suffered some form of female circumcision. More alarming is their estimate that 5,000 girls in Italy are at risk of being circumcised. Other European countries also report increasing numbers of young girls at risk.

In recent years, Britain and Sweden have passed tough laws outlawing female genital mutilation. Parents who allow their daughters to be mutilated face prison terms and can lose custody of their children. In the US, California has passed similar laws.

120 million victims

Female circumcision remains widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, parts of the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Malaysia and Indonesia. The most common procedure involves the removal of the clitoris. The most severe form is infibulation, which is the removal of the clitoris and stitching of the vaginal opening, leaving a small hole for the passage of menstrual blood. The latter form is most common in Somalia and Ethiopia, where 90 percent of all females are infibulated.

The UN estimates that about 120 million women have been victims of what it calls female genital mutilation. Other international organisations, many governments and human-rights groups also have condemned these practices, which persist mainly because they are so deeply embedded in the ethnic identity of traditional cultures.

"It's different in each country. In Egypt, it is done to reduce a woman's sexual drive and protect her virginity. In Nigeria, there is a superstition that if a woman's sex organ touches the head of a newborn, it brings bad luck," said Arro Hersi-Magan, a Somali gynaecologist who practices at Rome's Umberto I Polyclinic, where she has encountered many cases of female genital mutilation. "In Somalia, it is a sign of beauty and cleanliness," she said. The word gudniin means "pruning," as in pruning a tree to better prepare it for bearing fruit.

Islam does not impose this practice

While female circumcision is common in some Muslim countries, it is absent in others, and experts are quick to point out that nothing in Islam supports or condones the practice.

"This is true. Islam absolutely does not impose this practice," said Ali Mumin Ahad, Al-Gadi's husband. "But there is a strong relationship between Islam and its perpetuation. Ordinary people think that to do this to a woman is to be a good Muslim." He said that female circumcision is the product of maledominated societies and that Islam consistently reinforces the premise of male superiority and the importance of controlling women. "The more educated a woman becomes, the more she understands the uselessness of this practice, the more she will resist it," said Ahad, an economist and historian in Somalia before civil war forced him to flee. June 2002, *Chicago Tribune*

The root cause of persistent hunger is not a lack of resources but the destructive trade and agricultural policies of governments

The World Food Summit: What Went Wrong?

Why do more than 800 million people still go hungry in a world marked by incredible affluence? 180 nations were gathering in Rome from June 10 to 13 to address just that question at the "World Food Summit: Five Years Later" meeting. At the 1996 World Food Summit, also held in Rome, 185 nations signed a commitment to cut the number of hungry people in half by 2015.

The current Summit was called by the United Nations to examine why hunger persists despite the 1996 Plan of Action. Progress has lagged by at least 60 percent behind the goals for the first five years, and today, conditions are worsening in much of the world. Without a drastic reorientation of policies, it will be

impossible to meet the 2015 goal, and hunger may actually increase.

Policies since 1996

Research carried out by the Institute for Food and Development Policy reveals that since 1996, governments have presided over a set of policies that have conspired to undercut peasant, small and family farmers, and farm co-operatives in nations both North and South. These policies have included:

- runaway trade liberalisation.
- pitting family farmers in the Third World against the subsidised corporate farms in the North (witness the recent U.S. Farm Bill)
- forcing Third World countries to eliminate price supports and subsidies for food producers.
- the privatisation of credit.
- the excessive promotion of exports to the detriment of food crops
- the patenting of crop genetic resources by corporations who charge farmers for their use.
- and a bias toward expensive and questionable technologies like genetic engineering while virtually ignoring pro-poor alternatives like organic farming and agroecology.

Increasingly, poor farmers find that credit is inadequate or too expensive to cover their rising production costs, buyers of their crops are more scarce and monopolistic than ever, and prices are too low to cover credit and production costs. The net result has been a significant and continued deterioration in poor farmers' access to land, as they are forced to sell land they own, cannot afford land rentals, or lose land by defaulting on loans. The worst hunger in the world is found in rural areas, where the landless are the poorest of the poor. Yet governments have dragged their feet in implementing already existing land reform and land re-distribution policies, and have resisted efforts - sometimes using force - by people's

organisations and landless movements to push the implementation of these policies.

FORUM is demanding governments take agriculture out of the WTO

Hundreds of farmers' movements and nongovernmental organisations have come to Rome from around the world to hold their own Forum - the "World Forum on Food Sovereignty"- in parallel with the official Summit. They demand that governments take agriculture out of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which forces countries to open their borders to the cheap, dumped food imports that drive their own farmers out of business, off the land, and into hunger. They call for true land reform, to put good quality land in the hands of those who would sow it, rather than those who can afford to buy it. They demand that the fundamental right to food - recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - be made a reality by the enforcement of what they call "food sovereignty," which refers to the rights of peasants and family farmers to grow food for their own nations, and rights of poor consumers to enough to eat.

These demands, unlike the weak official calls for "will" and "money," do get at the root cause of persistent hunger, and should be endorsed by all caring people.

Peter Rosset, Ph.D., co-director of Food First/The Institute for Food and Development Policy. See also: http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=13355

EDITORIAL: Check out www.GATSwatch.org. General Agreement on Trades in Services is being described as the "son of MAI" under discussion by the European Union.

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: 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 6.0/95. 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.

NB: We invite you to redistribute this Newsletter to IAW members without an e-mail address. Also, please advise us if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, and in that case: please be so kind to contact Pat Richardson.

International Alliance of Women / Alliance Internationale des Femmes

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