

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES**

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

**Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales**

IAW NEWSLETTER June-July 2009, no. 6



Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

This time our main issue is the situation of women and children in refugee camps. There are thousands of them. UN Agencies are trying to help as well as they can, but so much is needed.

The violence against women and girls in war - and conflict areas, the sale of arms, the weak and/or bad governance, and brave attempts for Peace were at the centre of the discussions during the IAW Board meeting.

In this newsletter we go around the world with maids in India, nominations at the Human Rights Council, women in Iran, a campaign to protect women from gun violence in the home, and so on. At the end you will find news of conferences, reports and forthcoming events.

UNITED REFUGEE AGENCY - UNHCR

Annual Consultations with NGOs - Geneva, 29 June to 1 July 2009

This year's meeting will bring together more than 180 international and national NGOs for three days of talks on a variety of issues ranging from displacement in urban settings and protracted refugee situations to security and staff safety.

More than 340 delegates will attend the consultations at the Palais des Nations.

The refugee agency sees partnerships with NGOs as the best way to ensure that the basic needs of refugees and populations of concern are met. In 2008, some 25 percent of UNHCR's total expenditures were channelled through 635 NGOs, including 163 international agencies and 472 national ones.

Pakistan

June 26 (UNHCR): Displaced people in north-west Pakistan have been visiting their areas of origin on a "go-and-see" basis, to harvest crops, check on livestock and generally assess the possibility of returning home.

As part of this process, UNHCR conducted a rapid survey among 4,200 displaced families in Yar Hussain camp in the Swabi district of the North West Frontier Province. The families are primarily from Buner district. While the data is still being analyzed, initial findings suggest most people want to return home but are concerned about security conditions.

They cited improvements in security conditions and restored peace as pre-conditions to their return. Other reasons for people not wanting to return at this stage were destruction of houses and infrastructure such as electricity supply, and concerns about lack of education and food.

Continuing arrivals

Meanwhile, an average of 1,800 people (or 300 families) per day continue to arrive at Jalozaï camp, Nowshera district, which is being expanded as other camps in the North West Frontier Province are full. The new arrivals at Jalozaï are a mix of people previously staying with host families and those referred on from camps which are full.

Improving conditions

In all the organized camps, UNHCR is continuing to improve conditions, building shade structures over tents to relieve the heat and privacy walls around groups of tents. UNHCR is also improving infrastructure like lighting and fencing.

Preparation for the Monsoon season

Preparations are under way for the monsoon season expected in mid-July. UNHCR is reinforcing drainage systems, especially in flat low-lying camps like Larama in Peshawar and Sheikh Shahzad in Mardan. Many families have started to protect their family tent by building up low protective brick walls or draining canals.

Outside of camps, the UN refugee agency has this week been distributing relief items through its local partner, Sarhad Rural Support Programme, to almost 25,000 people staying with host families or in

schools in Charsadda, Nowshera and Mardan districts. Distribution of relief packages, including mats, plastic sheets, jerry cans and kitchen sets, is done through the humanitarian hubs run in conjunction with the World Food Programme.

By Ariane Rummery in Islamabad, Pakistan, on: <http://www.unhcr.org/4a44eb2a9.html>

All Pakistan Women's Association

During the IAW Board Meeting 2009 in Switzerland the representative of the All Pakistan Women's Association made a moving and urgent plea for education for girls in the camps. "Who knows how long people will be staying in those camps? The momentum is now! Funding is needed.

The situation in the camps is difficult. Husbands keep their wives inside - children are being sent out for water."

APWA is already doing a tremendous job in camps, but more can be done. The organisation has experience in education of women and girls, mostly in towns; with courses, like computer training.

*Their motto is: **"If you educate a woman, you educate a girl!"***

In rural areas transport is a big problem. Teachers cannot get there, they cannot meet together, schools for girls have been closed and destroyed by the Taliban, etc.

Chad - first Group of African Refugees Depart for Resettlement

William Spindler of the UN Refugee Agency said a first group of 11 refugees left the Chadian capital by air on 21 June to be resettled in the United States. The group comprised seven urban refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, three urban Sudanese refugees and one person from the Central African Republic, who had been living in a refugee camp in southern Chad.

Throughout this year UNCHR planned to identify a total of 1,800 cases for resettlement, most of them Sudanese refugees from Darfur living in refugee camps in eastern Chad.

Chad presently hosted a total of 250,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur in 12 UNHCR-run camps in the east of the country.

In addition, there were 70,000 refugees from the Central African Republic living in five camps in the south of the country. The United States had so far been the first country to promote resettlement from Chad. The next group was expected to depart from N'Djamena in early July and would mainly consist of Darfur refugees.

More on:

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The IAW representative from Chad, during one of the international meetings of the Tour Feministe in Switzerland, made a strong plea for funding to support the women and children in the refugee camps in her country. We were all touched to the core by her words. Her introduction in English and French can soon be found on the IAW website: www.womenalliance.org

Several other NGOs, like Amnesty International, asked for information afterwards.

The violence against women and girls in war- and conflict areas was an issue of serious discussion during the Board Meeting. Atrocious acts of politic gangs, sometimes in front of husbands and children.

IAW will discuss gender based violence again during Congress 2010 in South Africa.

Somalia

Fighting forces more Somalis to flee Mogadishu, pushing the number of displaced to almost 170,000. UNHCR is gravely concerned about the worsening displacement crisis in Somalia, where more than 160,000 people have fled Mogadishu since early May.

More on: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) 2009

This inter-governmental meeting, hosted by the Government of Greece, will be preceded by two Civil Society Days in Athens on 2 and 3 November 2009.

Participants in the Civil Society Days will draw on their experiences in the field of migration and development to formulate proposals that will be presented to government representatives during the GFMD.

Applications are now open for representatives of Civil Society actively working on Migration and

Development to apply to participate in the Civil Society Days.

This is a unique opportunity for civil society organisations, including diaspora groups and migrant associations, to input into the inter-governmental dialogue on making migration work for development. *For details, click on: <http://www.gfmd2009.org/default.aspx>*

Sweden, the European Union and the UN Refugee Agency

The United Nations refugee agency has called on Sweden to use its upcoming Presidency of the European Union, which begins on 1 July, to highlight the need to ensure that refugees, asylum-seekers and others requiring protection are able to find it throughout the Union.

The next six months will be a particularly crucial period for the future of EU asylum policy, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), which has published its recommendations to Sweden for its Presidency.

The EU is set to adopt a new multi-annual programme in the area of Justice and Home Affairs during the second half of 2009 which will determine the course of EU law and policy on asylum from 2010 through 2014, the agency noted.

More on: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31238&Cr=unhcr&Cr1=europeGlobal>

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

Obituary - Sachiko Okumura

One of the sweetest and much loved members passed away two weeks ago - Sachiko Okumura from the League of Women Voters of Japan. We heard the sad news during the Board Meeting and remembered her during a few moments of silence. We knew she was ill, but there was always hope to see her again and to talk to her and hear her gentle voice. It could not be. We miss her.

Kay Fraleigh, IAW representative to the UN in New York, who was not able to attend the Board Meeting, sent her appreciation and good wishes to us all. She mentioned that Judy Gordon will join the new executive committee of the NGO Committee on Mental Health as a Member at Large. *Congratulations, Judy!*

NGO REPORT on Women and Tobacco

The report, submitted by the International Alliance of Women and the International Network of Women Against Tobacco, is to be found on the IAW website: www.womenalliance.org

By IAW Member Soon-Young Yoon, with many thanks to those who contributed. Good news is that more countries than ever are reporting. Happy summer.

IAW Board Meeting

IAW covered a lot of issues in the lovely green hills of Heiden, Switzerland. The many reports, that have always taken so much time during meetings, were mailed far in advance to IAW secretary Lene Pind who collated them and had them printed into a handy 'booklet'.

Very efficient and to be repeated!

Serious issues, like peace, violence against women, justice and democracy, health and human rights, were discussed as centrepieces of attention. In between the in-house matters of the Alliance were put into order: finances, regional issues, representations, the future of IAW and nomination of a Task force, Beijing+15 at CSW etc.

The Feministe Tour of Switzerland was a great success! We were overwhelmed by the hospitality of the Swiss women's organisations and felt privileged to join them in their festivities and discussions in Heiden, Grub, Lucerne, Estavayer-le-lac, Berne and Geneva.

To the President of the Association Suisse pour les Droits de la Femme, Jessica Kehl, and to all her assisting colleagues, we offer our heartfelt thanks!

Campaign to protect women from gun violence in the home

Disarm Domestic violence -

IANSA - International Action Network on Small Arms

During the IAW Board Meeting in peaceful Switzerland, IANSA Women's Network held its campaign called 'Disarm Domestic Violence', from 15-21 June 2009.

Violence is the first international campaign to protect women from gun violence in the home. The main goal is to ensure that anyone with a history of domestic abuse is denied access to a firearm, or have their licences revoked.

Perhaps most shockingly, the greatest risk of gun violence to women around the world is not on the streets, or the battlefield, but in their own homes. Women are three times more likely to die violently if there is a gun in the house. Usually the perpetrator is a spouse or partner, often with a prior record of domestic abuse.

Gun violence can be part of the cycle of intimidation and aggression that many women experience from an intimate partner. For every woman killed or physically injured by firearms, many more are threatened. This is why IANSA has launched a campaign to demand policies which would keep women safe from gun violence.

IANSA women from over 28 countries are already involved and collecting information about the scale of the problem in Argentina, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, DR Congo, El Salvador, Haiti, Liberia, Macedonia, Mali, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

For more information about the launches so far, see: <http://www.iansa-women.org/node/172>

Sent to us by IANSA Secretary Sarah Masters.

In many countries domestic violence is increasing, as was reported during the IAW Board Meeting. Convenor of the IAW Commission on Violence: Mmabatho Ramagoshi, South Africa

AROUND THE WORLD

Maid to order in India

Every day more than 90m domestic workers oil the wheels of contemporary India. They clean, fetch, tend, serve and make it possible for many upwardly mobile women to pursue their careers without worrying about domestic chores. Yet this work is referred to as the 'informal sector' as if it were scarcely work at all.

Maids are excluded from labour laws. The exclusion is just a short distance to abuse: long hours, bad pay, inhuman treatment, physical and sexual harassment.

National Domestic Workers Movement

"From not getting paid to being kept hungry for two days for breaking a cup, the abuse of maids can take many forms," says Jeanne Devos, the Belgian nun who formed the National Domestic Workers Movement (NDWM) 25 years ago.

It gets three to four such cases a week from across India. But apart from organizing demonstrations outside employers' homes or on the streets, there is little the NDWM can do.

"They are not even recognized as workers, so there is no legal protection for them under labour laws. They can only go to a criminal court," says Devos.

The NDWM has been battling to change that status for years and has managed a few significant victories. Seven states - the four southern ones and Rajasthan, Bihar and Maharashtra - have passed legislation to protect domestic workers.

But "it hasn't been implemented as yet. That'll take time," says Devos.

Draft law

She can take comfort from news that the National Commission for Women (NCW) is working on a draft law to provide social security to domestic workers with the employer making a monetary contribution over and above the salary. "The draft is in the final stages and will be sent to the labour ministry in two months," says an NCW official.

More on: On: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/View-From-Venus/Maid-to-order-in-India/articleshow/4681898.cms>

Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

IRAN and Women

The news on Iran is changing every day. One thing is clear: women are taking a prominent part in the

opposition against the conservative government of *Mahmoud Ahmadinejad*.

We collected a few articles, so you can read for yourself.

* The Times in: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6466740.ece from Martin Fletcher in Tehran, who is putting a few question marks about the popularity of Mr Mousavi. *Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu.*

* The Washington Post has a very different story, focussing on the role of women and their anger, but you need to be a subscribing member to The Post to be able to read it.

* The Guardian is making a list of the dead and detained by the Iran government since the 12th of June. On: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2009/jun/29/iran-election-dead-detained>

* IRAN: Women at Forefront of Popular Defiance, an article by Sara Farhang, sketches the background of women's protests. On: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=47371>

Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council approved five candidates for special procedure mandates, including new Special Rapporteurs on the independence of judges and lawyers and on violence against women, and adopted a resolution under its organizational and procedural matters on issuance of reports of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in all official languages of the United Nations.

*At the beginning of the meeting, Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi, President of the Human Rights Council, said that in **closed meetings**, the Human Rights Council had decided to discontinue consideration of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the complaint procedure. (No explanation could be found).*

The Council approved five candidates for special procedure mandates (see the end of this newsletter). *Sent to us by IAW secretary Lene Pind. More on:*

<http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/2198BF97A8AE4D1DC12575D90036C71C?opendocument>

More Women in the European Parliament

The recent European elections led to a slight progress in the representation of women in the European Parliament (EP), which now reaches about **35%** (compared to about 30% at the beginning of the 1999-2004 term) but still doesn't attain parity or even the 40% of women threshold agreed by Member States of the Council of Europe.

The election results also show a worrying rise of the far right in many EU Member States, which could potentially be a threat to women's human rights.

Nomination of Commissioners

The European Women's Lobby has been proposing for some time a system of nomination of Commissioners whereby each Member State would propose a woman and a man as nominate Commissioners. The President would then have the possibility to choose among them with a view to achieving an equal representation of women and men in the new Commission.

More on <http://www.5050democracy.eu/>

IAW representative on the European's Women's Lobby: Joanna Manganara, Greece

“Unprecedented” global summit at the United Nations on 22 September

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon extended an invitation to heads of State and government to attend a summit to spur action towards reaching an ambitious climate change pact later this year.

The high-level meeting will be held at UN Headquarters just over two months before the start of the climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, where countries are expected to wrap up negotiations on an agreement to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

The UN can raise awareness of the issue of global warming but ultimately, Mr. Ban said, it is the world's parliaments, presidents, prime ministers, governors and mayors who must take bold measures to tackle climate change.

On: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31242&Cr=climate+change&Cr1=>

EVENTS - CONFERENCES - REPORTS - CAMPAIGNS

Women Getting into Boards Survey

The Australian Virtual Centre for Leadership for Women (CLW) is inviting women from Australia and other countries to complete a Survey which aims to explore the problems women experience getting into Boards on public and private organisations and the resources needed to enable women to succeed in attaining board positions.

You do not need to be a member of CLW to fill in this survey. The Survey will close on 12 August 2009 and the evaluated results will form a Report that will be available freely through CLW and used for developing strategies to help women achieve their goals in this area and for lobbying relevant bodies. The Boards Survey can be accessed from <http://www.leadershipforwomen.com.au/>

People's Voices on the Global Financial Crisis

On 20 June 2009 a coalition of civil society organizations and UN - NGLS, organised "People's Voices on the Crisis".

More on: <http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?article1396> and on: <http://tendays.socialwatch.org/>

UN Gear Campaign

European Campaign for the Gender Equality Architecture Reform at the UN - GEAR .

Highly recommended - see the website on <http://www.un-gear.eu/>

IAW is a member of GEAR and so is the European Women's Lobby, EWL

IAW Representative at the EWL: Joanna Manganara, Greece

Global Model UN Conference, 5-7 August 2009, Geneva, Switzerland

The United Nations Department of Public Information is organising the first annual Global Model United Nations Conference. The theme of the 2009 conference will be "The Millennium Development Goals: Lifting the Bottom Billion out of Poverty." On: <http://www.un.org/gmun/>

World Climate Conference-3

Climate prediction and information for decision-making: focusing on scientific advances in seasonal to inter-annual timescales, taking into account multi-decadal prediction. 31 August - 4 September 2009, Geneva - on: <http://www.wmo.int/wcc3/>

Partners in Action - the NGO Forum - 2-4 September 2009, Berlin, Germany

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Government of Germany is organising the "Global Partners in Action: NGO Forum on *Sexual and Reproductive Health* and Development Invest in Health, Rights and the Future." This forum will held from 2-4 September 2009 in Berlin, Germany.

For details, click on: http://www.globalngoforum.de/how_to_apply/

List of UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders

*Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes & Consequences

Ms. Rashida Manjoo - South Africa

*Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges & Lawyers

Ms. Gabriela Carina Silva Knauth De Albuquerque - Brazil

*Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Mr. Osman El-Hajje - Lebanon

*Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Mr. Mads Andenas - Norway

*Working Group on People of African Descent

Mr. Sicilianos Linos-Alexander - Greece

Mapping the World of Women's Information Services

This is an online database on women's information centres and libraries in Amsterdam that are open to the public. It currently contains approximately 400 women's information centres from over 140 countries and is updated weekly.

The Women's Thesaurus displays a list of subjects for the retrieval of information on the position of women and women's studies. It is possible to search specifically on geographical, time and occupational descriptors or the form of the information (for example a diary or manual). It has an application form. More on: <http://www.iiav.nl/mapping/>

Sent to us by IAW member Arina Angerman

IAW Newsletter / News Flash : Joke Sebus <iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net>
International Women's News : Priscilla Todd (English) <iaw.iwnews@womenalliance.org>
: Mathilde Duval (French) <aifnfi@womenalliance.org>
Membership Officer : Pat Richardson <iaw.membership@womenalliance.org>
Treasurer : Rakesh Dawan <iaw.treas@womenalliance.org>