

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

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



**IAW NEWS FLASH nr. 4 - September 2003**

**Equal Rights**

**Announcing a New Website for the IAW Young Women's Network**

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iaw\\_youngwomen/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iaw_youngwomen/)

Lotta Viinikka, our youngest Board Member, was appointed to coordinate a new network for younger members of IAW and to attract new members – to talk about the issues that affect young women today, to exchange ideas and information, to put proposals to the Alliance for lobbying and action. Please tell your daughters, nieces, grand daughters, grand nieces, and their friends, about this website and encourage them to become involved. This is the start of something very exciting just at the time the Alliance is looking forward to its second century.

Lotta is the Secretary General of Unioni, the League of Finnish Feminists. Unioni is a longstanding Affiliate of the Alliance and Lotta tells us that a lot of new members have enrolled recently. Lotta can be contacted on : paasihteeri@naisunioni.fi

***YOUNG WOMEN'S INSTITUTE TACKLING HIV/AIDS AND POVERTY IN AFRICA,  
A PERSONAL REFLECTION***

The following is a reflection on my participation at the Young Women in Leadership Institute from 30 June- 4 July 2003. Titled *Tackling HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Africa* organised by the Young Women and Leadership (YWL) Program of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) it took place in Cape Town, South Africa.

Two main themes that emerged for me were the new learning of using *silence* as a tool for self-transformation and cultural safety.

*Silence.* Facilitated by Pregs Grovender, she focussed on the use of *silence* as a tool to reconnect the power within ourselves. This *power* as she notes gives us strength and self-sustenance through the use of deep self-reflection. Govender explains that when we become overwhelmed with exhaustion or fear and challenged by power, politics and fundamentalism, we cease to release the power within us. I translate this concept of silence as self-identification and self-care. Do we, as young women know who we are? Do we realise our values and use self-care in our practice? It is through the deconstruction and reframing of our thoughts that we are able to focus on our values and passions, which can be reflected in our leadership. The aim is to focus on our skills and abilities in order for us to creatively and clearly strategise on our advocacy and activism practice. To continue to *hope*.

*Cultural safety.* The distance between people who seek to retain their past and those that want to proceed with the future in terms of partnership is wider than ever. The gap between our colonial past and present is yet to be developed further. Is education and acknowledging our colonial past enough for deep dialogue between two people of a different culture? Education, depending on who's culture we are educating on is based on sustainability of traditions, values and ideologically driven. When educating people on the macro politics of the UN system, World Bank and International Monetary Fund, are we owning our dominant birth status?

Are we perpetuating cultural imperialism? With a heavy heart, I continue to observe the intrinsic nature of passive racism, implicit power and explicit powerlessness. Who are we representing when we transfer knowledge? Whose' knowledge are we transferring? Having said this, research also shows

that the attitude of helplessness amongst coloured people is also learned, i.e. social learning theory, victimisation and learned helplessness theory. Using the above theories as examples, we also know that it can cause psychological problems amongst survivors. How then can we translate these into good practice for future partnerships within a culturally diverse modern world? How can we represent these discourses whilst acknowledging and being proud of our identity? Who am I? *Silence...*

*Reflection by Sheryl Wong. Sheryl is a member of the International Advisory Group of the Young Women in Leadership Program of AWID and the International Museum of Women. Individual member of IAW. She is working on a research on racism and partnership in the hope of developing a new practice theory for professionals.*

### **Hail To The Woman Chief**

In what many commentators described as a clear sign of progress and a comprehensive break with culture, thousands of Balete thronged their main Kgotla in Ramotswa to witness the installation of the first woman paramount chief at the weekend.

Mosadi Seboko (52) is the first woman to become the substantive chief of a tribe in modern day Botswana. Her uncles Lucas Manyane Mangope, former Bophuthatswana, and Tshukudu Mokgosi draped her in a leopard skin. Speaker after speaker gave Balete credit for their unprecedented decision to give chieftainship to a woman. Mosadi is the daughter of the late Balete chief, Kgosi Mokgosi Seboko. She takes over from her younger brother, Kgosi Seboko, who passed away three years ago.

The Queen Mother of Bafokeng in South Africa, Semane Molotlegi, advised Mosadi to be fair-minded and to treat her people equally. She warned that there will be those who will make attempts to influence and to win her favour, and said it would be dangerous to give in to such people. Woman's rights activist, Justice Athaliah Molokomme, said looking at history when women were not even allowed at the Kgotla, or to participate in its deliberations, it is a clear sign that Balete adapted to change. "In the past women did not come to the Kgotla. If they did then they only had to listen to men," said Molokomme.

Minister of Local Government Michael Tshipinare, under whose portfolio the ministry falls, also hailed Balete for being progressive and being the first tribe in Botswana to embrace change. Tshipinare said it was a good thing that Balete had looked at Mosadi's qualities and not her gender. He reminded Batswana that chieftainship responsibilities have grown in magnitude and have become complex and intricate. As such he advised other tribes to appoint chiefs based on merit rather than gender, as is tradition in Botswana. "The role of Dikgosi is becoming multi-faceted and intricate. They advise government on customs, traditions and tribal matters. As such we need skilled and experienced people like Mosadi to do such a job," said Tshipinare.

For her part Mosadi thanked her people for having put her on the throne voluntarily. She was particularly grateful that her ascendance to the throne was without disputes that have characterised succession in Botswana. "I am a Kgosi not because I am a woman, but because it is my birth right," she said. She reminded Balete that there are many challenges facing them as a people - joblessness, poverty and lawlessness among the youth. Landlessness is another challenge. She announced that she will be talking to government land owned by her tribe, which government has expressed interest in acquiring.

By Spencer Mogapi, The Botswana Gazette, 03-09-03, [www.gazette.bw/tbg\\_head1.htm](http://www.gazette.bw/tbg_head1.htm)

*Sent in by IAW member Anjana Basu*

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You can find the IAW News Flash also on the IAW website: <http://www.womenalliance.com>