

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

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales



Equal Rights

IAW NEWSLETTER – Oktober 2004, nr. 7

Dear IAW members,

After most enjoyable festivities in Berlin, the city where IAW started its hundred years campaign for women's vote and equal rights, most of us travelled by train to Freiburg, where the business side of the IAW Congress was to be completed. The result of the deliberations are to be found in the Presidential letter on www.womenalliance.com. You will be pleasantly surprised: a lot has been accomplished! In this newsletter we look at different aspects of the environment and sustainable development, an issue that is in a way 'bigger than life'. And as always you will find news of coming events and URLs of interesting websites.

Jubilee in Berlin

The highlight of the Jubilee in Berlin was the marvellous celebration in the impressive City Hall of Berlin, with top speakers, with the presentation of the Centenary Publication and with the opening of the Exhibition 'Return to Berlin 1902-2004'. After that, a panel of wise longstanding IAW members and enthusiastic younger women talked about the past and the future. A charming note was the 'roll call' of the delegations by country, which allowed us to admire the beautiful national costumes of our Indian, African and Japanese sisters. All this was interspersed with Le Beau Trio playing classical music. A moving moment was one minute silence for all the IAW sisters we had lost in recent years. After a champagne reception and a buffet lunch in the Berliner Rathaus Wappensaal, we returned by bus to our comfortable hotel on the outskirts of Berlin. Our heartfelt thanks and compliments to the IAW organising group and the members of IAW Affiliate 'The Deutscher Staatsbürgerinnen-Verband' for this wonderful event. Well done!

Jubilee in Freiburg

In Freiburg we were warmly welcomed by Eva Schneider-Borgmann, the President of our other Affiliate in Germany, 'The Deutscher Frauenring' and by the Mayor of Freiburg, Dieter Solomon.

The business side of Congress was accomplished in the big Concert Hall of Freiburg. A new constitution had to be finalised and approved (it took lots of time!), resolutions discussed, the Action Programme supplemented and information shared about reports of IAW delegates who had been to international conferences. It was a pity there was not enough time to talk about the reports of IAW Affiliates and Associates. At the end of Congress a new Board was elected for the coming three years.

The Deutscher Frauenring organised several festivities. We were welcomed at a reception in the beautiful and ancient City Hall of Freiburg. Renate Schmidt, the Minister of Family Matters and Gender Equality, one of the six women ministers of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland, gave us a stimulating address. Both speakers talked about gender equality and were often interrupted by the applause of the assembled IAW members.

Particularly interesting were the three Round Table discussions about issues including: Human Rights, CEDAW, Violence, Health, Globalisation, Environment, the Knowledge Society as a challenge, Gender Responsibility in Politics. We hope to publish a selection of the introductions in IWNNews and in the e-newsletter.

Congress came to an end with a festive Jubilee Dinner. There were many speeches and there was also lovely live music. Afterwards most of us went on excursions to the Schwarzwald and to the Council of the EU in Strasbourg.

It was a splendid Jubilee! With fresh energy we will step into the next hundred years!

Note: Priscilla Todd needs more photos for the IWNNews, especially a good one of the new Board. Please send them to her at iaw.iwnnews@toddsec.com

Who made the IAW Jubilee Swing?

Let's start with one of the wise women on the panel, former President Olive Bloomer, who had to stay in Berlin before returning home after a fall. Kay Fraleigh stayed with her in Berlin. We missed them both! Olive is recovering well and we send her our best wishes. President Pat Giles from Australia could not come at all, because of a serious accident. We missed her kind face and also the charming way she always managed IAW conferences with members from all over the world, all with their special talents and cultural differences. Thank you, Pat for your years as President and our best wishes for a speedy recovery!

Rosy Weiss from Austria became the new IAW President at Congress and she was warmly welcomed. She has set some priorities and we wish her all the best! Two Executive Vice-Presidents will assist Rosy: Dr. Aparna Basu from India has a worldwide reputation in several fields and we are honoured to have her talents; Lyda Verstegen from the Netherlands introduced us to the new IAW constitution (it took five years!). Her patience and calm perseverance will be very helpful in the new Executive Committee. Secretary Alison Brown did a terrific job before and during Congress. She brought us into the 21st century using her laptop computer and we could see the agenda items and amendments as they were typed on the big screen. The Treasurer, Marieluise Weber has the difficult job of warning us against too much spending and keeping the finances in order. We wish her a lot of strength and wisdom in the coming years. Not in the Executive but supporting it all is Pat Richardson from Australia, who knows more than anyone else in IAW about Affiliates and Associates and members. Thank you Pat for continuing to do a great job as our Membership Officer!

I'm sorry we can only mention a few more who made the Jubilee swing. Marijke Peters produced the Jubilee Publication 1994-2004, ably assisted by Helen Self. Many IAW members joined them in writing articles about parts of the history of IAW and so it became a real IAW history. The first edition was sold out at Congress. Bettina Clarke produced an Exhibition *Back to Berlin 1994-2004* on a big laminated screen, an amazing example of technical skill. And last but not least the Presidents of the German IAW Affiliates Eveline Neumann and Eva Schneider-Borgmann, who organised us cheerfully from one part of the programme to the other, supported by their Board members. Thank you all most warmly! You all made the Jubilee a memorable event.

IAW and Beijing + 10, Geneva,

The IAW delegation to the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Implementation of Beijing and the NGO Forum, dec. 2004, Geneva, will comprise: Rosy Weiss, IAW President, Jessica Kehl-Lauff, IAW permanent representative to UNECE and H el ene Sackstein, IAW Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Commission.

European members interested in knowing their governments' views on the implementation of Beijing can have a look at www.unece.org/oes/gender/beijing10.htm For more information (programme, etc) take full advantage of the information provided by the UNECE website.

New website for IAW Affiliate the Lithuanian Women's Society

We have a new website! See <http://www.womenalliance.com/compos.html>: or go to www.moterys.w3.lt/moterys_senas/angliskai/angliskai_main.htm

New IAW Affiliate with a website - Frauennetzwerk fur Frieden

Welcome! On www.frauennetzwerk-fuer-frieden.de

IAW Meeting in Denmark

On October 9th there was a meeting in Silkeborg with the Danish IAW members who participated in Berlin, together with Lene Pind and Siri Hangeland (from Norway). We went through the items that were brought up at the Congress and were all enthusiastic about IAW! We decided to organise a conference concerning prostitution in Copenhagen in October 2006. Please contact me if you have any comments or suggestions. *Siri Hangeland*, IAW Convenor of the Commission of violence against women, prostitution and trafficking, sirih@vfk.no

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Russian approval of Kyoto Climate Change Treaty

On 30 September 2004 the United Nations welcomed the Russian Government's endorsement of the Kyoto Protocol regulating emissions linked to climate change - a move that brings the Pact one step closer to enforcement. Secretary-General Kofi Annan hailed the move since the Protocol's entry into force would be the "essential first step in tackling the planetary challenge posed by climate change".

As of last week, 125 countries have ratified or acceded to the Protocol, which is part of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. To enter into force 55 Parties to the Convention must ratify the Protocol, including developed countries whose combined 1990 emissions of carbon dioxide exceed 55 per cent of that group's total. Russia, with 17 per cent of the emissions, would push the amount beyond the threshold, according to the Convention's secretariat. The United States has not ratified the pact. [Ed. Australia is another country that has not ratified.]

In January 2005, the UN will organise an International Meeting to Review Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Mauritius. That action programme was originally adopted a decade ago at a UN conference in Barbados. See also <http://www.sidsnet.org/>

Nobel Prize for Peace

Wangari Maathai from Kenya, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. She has been planting with her women of the Green Belt Movement many many trees in the African soil!

Chernobil

*Silent on the beach in this atomic age,
not knowing if through the sand will run a destiny
of an all consuming plague of skin and soul,
pretending that this day is any day in Rome, an outing to the sea,
not knowing if one should pour milk into the tea
and if the sun will scorch us with some unnamed disease –
these are the thoughts, the thoughts of my unease.*

By Esther Gravett, May 1986. Dedicated to Renate Timms of the Deutscher Frauenring who, with her friends, hosts 40 children from Chernobil every year during a period of 4 weeks.

A Tree planting project with Genetically Modified Trees

Two years ago, China's State Forestry Administration approved genetically modified (GM) poplar trees for commercial planting. Well over one million insect resistant GM poplars have now been planted in China. Also two years ago, China launched the world's largest tree planting project. By 2012 the government aims to have covered an area of 44 million hectares with trees. Decades of deforestation have left China facing serious environmental problems, including droughts and deadly floods. Sandstorms from the Gobi Desert frequently turn the air in Beijing yellowish brown, reducing visibility to a few metres. The desert is creeping relentlessly towards China's capital city.

Although the government describes its tree planting as reforestation, most of the area planted will be monoculture tree plantations, including plantations of GM trees. "The first step is to raise plantations using fast-growing species such as poplar and larch", wrote Wang Lida, Han Yifan and Hu Jianjun of the Chinese Academy of Forestry in a recently published book ("Molecular Genetics and Breeding of Forest Trees" edited by Sandeep Kumar and Matthias Fladung).

However, insect damage in plantations in China is a serious problem. Rather than suggesting planting a mixture of trees which might not be so susceptible to insect damage, the three Chinese forestry scientists suggest a GM tree technical fix. "Recent research on insect-resistant forest tree breeding shows considerable promise," they wrote. Forestry scientists at the Chinese Academy of Forestry started research into GM poplar trees in the late 1980s. From 1990 to 1995, they were helped by an FAO-run project which provided capacity building, technology transfer and laboratory support. The \$1.8 million project was funded by the United Nations Development Project.

Read about the pros and contras of planting GM trees in an article by Chris Lang on www.wrm.org.uy

Eco-tourism?

An Indian billionaire's plan to build a series of floating "eco-tourist" cities on the Sundarbans, the world's biggest mangrove swamp, is being opposed by campaigners who say it amounts to the "total destruction" of the pristine delta system. Subrata Roy's £78m project includes medical centres, a casino, a golf course and five-star hotels on four islands which will be linked by speedboats in the wetland straddling the border with Bangladesh. His company, Sahara, which has acquired 2,250 hectares (900 acres) of land, says it will bring employment to one of the poorest places in India. Work was supposed to start this month but has been delayed by the protests.

UNESCO designated the Sundarbans a world heritage site in 1987. Environmentalists say the maze of rivers and mangroves has some of the world's most endangered species, such as the Bengal tiger and the Irrawady dolphin, as well as providing a livelihood for 500,000 villagers whose access to the creeks and streams would be blocked by the development. "This is a plaything for the rich that is being created in the guise of development," said Bittu Sahgal, editor of Sanctuary, a magazine which campaigns on green issues. "It would be a particularly short-sighted way for the government to conduct business if this gets approved."

The Guardian, by Randeep Ramesh, South Asian correspondent.

World Conference on Disaster Reduction

The UN/ISDR is organising the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in Kobe, Japan from 18 to 22 January 2005. The Conference aims to raise the profile of risk reduction and emphasize the importance of education and public awareness for disaster reduction. On <http://www.unisdr.org/>

Ida Kurth continues as Convenor of the IAW Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development Commission Ida_Kurth@web.de

WOMEN'S RIGHTS - HUMAN RIGHTS

A form of evil and terror: that chews up women and spits them out.

Eerwala, Pakistan — I'm still trying to help out President Bush by tracking down Osama bin Laden. After poking through remote parts of Pakistan, asking for a tall Arab with a beard, I can't say I've earned that \$25 million reward. But I did come across someone even more extraordinary than Osama.

Usually we journalists write about rogues, but Mukhtaran Bibi could not be more altruistic or brave, as the men who gang-raped her discovered. I firmly believe that the central moral challenge of this century, equivalent to the struggles against slavery in the 19th century or against totalitarianism in the 20th, will be to address sex inequality in the third world - and it's the stories of women like Ms. Mukhtaran that convince me this is so. The plight of women in developing countries isn't addressed much in the West, and it certainly isn't a hot topic in the presidential campaign. But it's a life-and-death matter in villages like Meerwala, a 12-hour drive southeast from Islamabad.

In June 2002, the police say, members of a high-status tribe sexually abused one of Ms. Mukhtaran's brothers and then covered up their crime by falsely accusing him of having an affair with a high-status woman. The village's tribal council determined that the suitable punishment for the supposed affair was for high-status men to rape one of the boy's sisters, so the council sentenced Ms. Mukhtaran to be gang-raped.

As members of the high-status tribe danced in joy, four men stripped her naked and took turns raping her. Then they forced her to walk home naked in front of 300 villagers. In Pakistan's conservative Muslim society, Ms Mukhtaran's duty was now clear: she was supposed to commit suicide. "Just like other women, I initially thought of killing myself," said Ms. Mukhtaran, now 30. Her older brother, Hezoor Bux, explained: "A girl who has been raped has no honourable place in the village. Nobody respects the girl, or her parents. There's a stigma, and the only way out is suicide."

A girl in the next village was gang-raped a week after Ms Mukhtaran, and she took the traditional route: she swallowed a bottle of pesticide and dropped dead. But instead of killing herself, Ms Mukhtaran testified against her attackers and propounded the shocking idea that the shame lies in raping, rather than in being raped. The rapists are now on death row, and President Pervez Musharraf presented Ms Mukhtaran with the equivalent of \$8,300 and ordered round-the-clock police protection for her.

Ms Mukhtaran, who had never gone to school herself, used the money to build one school in the village for girls and another for boys - because, she said, education is the best way to achieve social change. The girls' school is named for her, and she is now studying in its fourth-grade class. "Why should I have spent the money on myself?" she asked, adding, "This way the money is helping all the girls, all the children."

I wish the story ended there. But the Pakistani government has neglected its pledge to pay the schools' operating expenses. "The government made lots of promises, but it hasn't done much," Ms. Mukhtaran said bluntly. She has had to buy food for the police who protect her, as well as pay some school expenses. So, she said, "I've run out of money". Unless the schools can raise new funds, they may have to close.

Meanwhile, villagers say that relatives of the rapists are waiting for the police to leave and then will put Ms Mukhtaran in her place by slaughtering her and her entire family. I walked to the area where the high-status tribesmen live. They denied planning to kill Ms. Mukhtaran, but were unapologetic about her rape. "Mukhtaran is totally disgraced," Taj Bibi, a matriarch in a high-status family, said with satisfaction. "She has no respect in society."

So although I did not find Osama, I did encounter **a much more ubiquitous form of evil and terror: a culture, stretching across about half the globe, that chews up women and spits them out.** We in the West could help chip away at that oppression, with health and literacy programs and by simply speaking out against it, just as we once stood up against slavery and totalitarianism. But instead of standing beside fighters like Ms Mukhtaran, we're still sitting on the fence.

By Nicholas D. Kristof, New York Times; send to us by IAW member Anjana Basu.

Divorce, pavement style

Taking advantage of their ignorance and illiteracy, many men are illegally divorcing their wives, duping them of property and even snatching away custody rights over their children. And all this is happening right under the nose, as it were, of the State Women's Commission (SWC). Just a stone's throw away from the SWC in Mumbai, an illegal business is flourishing. Men are 'buying' divorces for as little as Rs 2,000. Outside the Bandra Court, lawyers and notaries, who solicit business like roadside hawkers, register marriages on the spot and give couples an instant 'divorce by mutual consent'. The 'deed of divorce', which unsuspecting wives are asked to sign — is prepared on a Rs 100 stamp paper. The entire process of divorce takes as long as it does to sign the paper. The charge is upwards of Rs 2,000 for the document.

You can't just wish away discrimination against women. You have to fight it. And to do that it helps if you have some sort of training and understanding of the issues you are dealing with. This kind of training take place at the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) — organised by the National Alliance of Women. Inaugurated by Dr Jashodhara Bagchi, chairperson State Women's Commission, the five-day training programme assessed the current situation in eastern India, and introduced some basic concepts of gender training. These included such topics as Social Construction of Gender, Understanding Discrimination, Promoting Human Rights of Women, Role of Law and even The History of CEDAW.

Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu,

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040822/asp/look/story_3643368.asp#2

Wife beaters beware, a tax is in the air

A group of Swedish politicians is proposing to hit men with a domestic violence tax in order to pay for the costs to society of abuse against women. Sweden's parliament will open debate today on the Left Party proposal, which follows an Amnesty International report this year which found that violence against women increased almost 40 per cent during the 1990s and that 20 to 40 women are battered to death in Sweden each year. "It must be clear to all we have a gigantic social problem and cost in men's violence towards women and we must discuss how we are going to pay for it," said Gudrun Schyman, the party's former leader, and one of several female MPs who have signed the motion. "We have to have a discussion so that men understand that they have a collective financial responsibility," she added.

The Left Party says the idea of men collectively paying for the social costs of violence towards women is no different in principle than the fact that poor people pay less tax than rich people. The Left Party, which has 30 members in the 349-seat Swedish parliament, supports the Social Democratic minority government, giving it enough votes to muster a majority.

In 2003, 22,400 cases of violence against women were reported to police, but the country's Council for Crime Prevention said that the number could be higher because many women do not report abuse. Sweden already has the highest taxes in Europe, with a person earning a monthly salary of 30,000 kronor (£2,280) paying 35 per cent tax.

The Daily Telegraph, by Julian Isherwood.

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

Humanitarian Aid given by ADDEM, IAW Affiliate in the Dominican Republic

IAW Affiliate ADDEM wrote us from Santo Domingo

On May 22 2004, a natural disaster occurred in the city of Jimani. The inundation of flooding that caused by the river Solie, left a whole population dead. On 27 May Mrs. Reyna Cohen made an explorative visit, to identify the problematic situation of the citizens of the city. Those who did not lose their houses were suffering physical traumas, had lost their family members and were in urgent need of help. The most urgent problems were the lack and shortage of water and food, clothing, medicine and in particular the state of shock of some citizens who had lost their family members and their houses.

In this visit we confirmed the needs, for we participated in the meeting of all the organizations' agencies for national and international cooperation, for the analysis of the situation and identification of the needs. We returned to Santo Domingo with the intention to manage food, water, clothing, medicine, and human resources (Doctors, psychologist, therapist and nurses.)

*The work was done in eight trips weekly. Our purpose is to obtain auspices to maintain a center permanently in the affected zone. It's really important to know that **ADDEM** contacted leaders and community organizations just as it maintained communication with the health department and the provincial directives of health, with the representation of the Pan-American organization of health OPS/OMS and other key agents.*

Ivy Rahman – a sad loss of a great activist for women's rights

On 21 August, while attending a rally to protest recent bombings and an increase in fundamentalism, Ivy Rahman was critically injured by grenades thrown by terrorists. She succumbed to her injuries on 24 August.

Ivy Rahman, President of IAW Affiliate Mahila Samity, was a former board member of the Alliance and was running again this year. She was founder of the National Society for the Blind and on the board of the Acid Survivors Foundation. She was a member of the UN Association of Bangladesh, the Indo Bangla Friendship Society, Red Crescent Society and the Family Planning Association. She is greatly missed by her many IAW friends.

EVENTS – FELLOWSHIPS - CONFERENCES

Visit UNIFEM's website at <http://www.unifem.org/news/currents/currents200410.html> for news of UNIFEM around the world and the 4th Anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1325.

UNESCO has interesting projects on Education, also in French on <http://portal.unesco.org/education/>
United Nations Reform

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) is launching a new section of its website that will provide up-to-date information on UN reform with a special focus on UN – Civil Society Relations. Please visit: www.un-ngls.org/UNreform

Big international Databank for Women all over the World

This database has information about 30.000 women and a bibliography of 600 names women. In English and German on <http://www.fembio.org/index.shtml>

The National Women's Hall of Fame

Another database, connected with the Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, USA. In 1848 this was the venue of the first Convention of Women's Rights. With a bibliography of 207 women, <http://www.greatwomen.org/home.php>.

UNESCAP eNews Bulletin

The United Nations Information Services (UNIS) is pleased to provide you with the latest issue of the UNESCAP eNews Bulletin, October 2004 for your reference. You can download this bulletin from this website <http://www.unescap.org/unis/UN_ESCAP_News_Bulletin/Oct-04/Oct04.asp>.

UN Conference on Trade and Development - UNCTAD

UNCTAD is announcing an Expert Meeting on Promoting the Export Competitiveness of SMEs, to be held in Geneva from 8 to 10 December 2004. Funds will be made available to finance the participation of a limited number of officially nominated experts from LDCs. Nominations from governments with requests for financing should be received at UNCTAD Secretariat no later than 27 October 2004. Documents will be available on the UNCTAD website www.unctad.org under the heading "Meetings".

Fellowship Colby College

The Colby College announces a call for nominations for the 2005 Oak Human Rights Fellowship, sponsored by the Oak Institute for the Study of International Human Rights. The fellowship is a one-semester appointment as a scholar-in-residence at the College. In 2005 the focus of search is on Health and Human Rights. The appointment is for the fall semester of 2005 and the College provides a stipend of \$ 32,000 plus transportation, housing, health care coverage, and other fringe benefits. The deadline for applications is January 14, 2005. More information can be found on the web page www.colby.edu/oak
Sent to us by Immediate Past President Patricia Giles

How to register for the World Social Forum 2005

The registrations for World Social Forum 2005, to be held in Porto Alegre (Brazil) from 26 to 31 January 2005, are opened for organisations and individuals. For information have a look at <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/home.asp>

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