



***In this issue...***

**MOVEMENTS WITHIN**

53<sup>rd</sup> CSW comes to an end,  
notes culture of caregiving .....1  
Staying Alive:  
Reproductive Health Bill  
in the Philippines .....11  
IWD 2009:  
Women at every turn.....15

**COMMUNITY AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

Yet Again:  
Web Crackdown in Thailand .....1  
Pakistan's airwaves:  
On militant turf, Radio Khyber  
offers a softer voice ..... 13

**INTERMOVEMENTS**

Israel Elections: Chances for Peace  
in a Poll during Conflict?.....1  
The Monrovia Declaration .....9

***Plus...***

53<sup>rd</sup> CSW Agreed Conclusions  
Asia Pacific Caucus Statement  
at the 53<sup>rd</sup> CSW

**53<sup>rd</sup> CSW comes to an end,  
notes culture of caregiving**

by Isis International with the reports from the Asia Pacific Women's Watch

After lengthy and tense negotiations, the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women came to an end last 13 March 2009 in New York, United States, leaving most feminists satisfied. With the theme, "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS," CSW affirmed the need to put in place responses that will recognise and encourage the equal roles between women and men in caring for people with HIV/AIDS beginning at the community level.

The Agreed Conclusions noted the important international agreements such as the International Labour Organisation's Convention 156 which calls for a reconciliation between work and family responsibilities. As they recognise the caregiving work in households, which are mostly assumed by women and girls, the document asked that such usually unpaid contribution be measured. It stressed that results from such metrics can better inform future policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and care-givers especially women and girls.

The Agreed Conclusions also picked up the points raised on the socio-cultural dimensions behind the inadequate health services for people with HIV/AIDS and the skewed division of labour in care-giving. The Asia Pacific Caucus, for instance, noted that much of government measures on HIV/AIDS have been focused on otherwise high-risk patients such as men who have sex with men (MSM), prostituted men and women and drug dependents.

*Read more on page 6*

**Yet Again:  
Web Crackdown in Thailand**

by Nina Somera

Thailand's police has once more hogged the headlines with the arrest of Pratchatai webmaster Chiranuch Pemchaiporn on 6 March 2009 on the basis of the Computer-related Crime Act of 2007. However when the police came to the office in two vans and seized the computer and other electronic devices, they could not identify which posts violated the law.

In a statement, Pratchatai founder and former senator Jon Ungpakorn remarked, "I think the police simply performed their roles, but there must be someone behind the action who probably wanted to close down Prachatai website." Pratchatai is a progressive online news resource that established to be watchdog during the premiership of Thaksin Shinawatra.

*Read more on page 8*

**Israel Elections:  
Chances for Peace in a  
Poll during Conflict?**

by Nina Somera

Although Israel "ended" its war on Gaza in January 2009, Israel momentarily focused on its internal affairs.

Apparently, not to reflect on the global condemnation on its brutal response to the Palestinians but to decide which parties and leaders can continue the conflict.

As a *Washington Post* editorial put it, "[The] elections often turn on a single question: Who looks tougher on national security?"

Last February, Israelis trooped to polling stations to elect their new prime minister. Principal front runners include Tzipi Livni of the Kadima Party, Benjamin Netanyahu of Likud and Avigdor Lieberman of Yisrael Beytenu.

*Read more on page 6*



**LIFE IS MUCH EASIER  
IF WE BURN OUR  
BRAINS  
AND KEEP OUR  
BRAS**

*Illustration by Bindia Thapar. From Laughing Matters by Kamla Bhasin and Bindia Thapar. New Delhi: Jagori, 2007*

## Agreed Conclusions of the 53rd Session of the Commission of the Status of Women

### The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the declaration adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.
2. The Commission reaffirms the outcomes of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, the 2000 Millennium Summit, the 2002 World Summit on Children, the 2002 Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development and recalls the 2005 World Summit, and recognizes further that their full and effective implementation is essential to the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS.
3. The Commission reiterates that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and their Optional Protocols, as well as other conventions and treaties provide a legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for the promotion of equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.
4. The Commission reiterates the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, which, inter-alia, expressed concern that gender inequality increases women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, the overall expansion and feminization of the pandemic, and also acknowledges that women and girls bear the disproportionate burden to care for and support those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
5. The Commission duly notes the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981, (No. 156) and its corresponding Recommendation (No. 165) which provide a framework for reconciling work and family responsibilities.
6. The Commission recognises that gender inequalities still exist and are reflected in imbalances of power between women and men in all spheres of society. The Commission further recognises that everyone benefits from gender equality and that the negative impacts of gender inequality are borne by society as a whole and emphasises, therefore, that men and boys, through taking responsibility themselves and working jointly in partnership with women and girls, are essential to achieving the goals of gender equality, development and peace. The Commission recognises the capacity of men and boys in bringing about change in attitudes, relationships and access to resources and decision-making which are critical for the promotion of gender equality and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women.
7. The Commission recognises that the full integration of women into the formal economy and, in particular, into economic decision-making, means changing the current gender-based division of labour into new economic structures where women and men enjoy equal treatment, pay and power, including sharing of paid and unpaid work.
8. The Commission notes that the costs of unequal sharing of responsibilities include weaker labour market attachment for women (foregone jobs, shorter working hours, confinement to informal work, and lower wages), weaker access to social security benefits, and less time for education/training, leisure and self-care, and political activities.
9. The Commission recognises that caregiving work at the household, family and community levels includes the support and care of children, older persons, the sick, persons with disabilities, and caring associated with family kinship and community responsibilities, which is affected by factors such as size of household and number and age of children, with significant differences between developed and developing countries in the availability of infrastructure and services supporting caregiving. The Commission also recognises that gender inequality and discrimination contribute to the continuing imbalance in the division of labour between women and men and perpetuate stereotypical perceptions of men and women. The Commission further recognises that changes in demographics in ageing and youthful societies, and in the context of HIV/AIDS, have increased the need for, and scope of, care.
10. The Commission further welcomes ongoing partnerships between stakeholders at all levels and the commitments on gender equality and HIV/AIDS announced at the 2008 high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals.
11. The Commission expresses its deep concern over the negative impact of the global economic and financial crisis which could hamper progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
12. The Commission acknowledges the important role of national machineries for the advancement of women, national human rights institutions where they exist, and civil society, especially women's organisations, in advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, and recognises their contributions to the work of the Commission.
13. The Commission reaffirms the commitment to the equal participation of women and men in public and political life as a key element to women's and men's equal participation in care giving.
14. The Commission acknowledges General Assembly resolution 62/277 of 15 September 2008, in particular its gender-specific provisions, and in this context encourages the ongoing work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.
15. The Commission urges Governments, including local authorities, to take the following actions, as appropriate, with the relevant entities of the United Nations system, international and regional organisations, within their respective mandates, as well

as civil society, the private sector, employer organisations, trade unions, media and other relevant actors:

a. Intensify efforts to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, and the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, and the outcomes of their follow-up processes;

b. Consider ratifying or acceding to, as a particular matter of priority, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their respective Optional Protocols, limit the extent of any reservations that they lodge and regularly review such reservations with a view to withdrawing them so as to ensure that no reservation is incompatible with the object and purpose of the relevant treaty; and implement them fully by, inter alia, putting in place effective national legislation, policies and action plans;

c. Consider, as a matter of priority, the ratification and implementation of the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and the implementation of its corresponding Recommendation (No. 165) which provide a framework for reconciling work and family responsibilities;

d. Review, and where appropriate, revise, amend, or abolish all laws, regulations, policies, practices and customs that discriminate against women or have a discriminatory impact on women, and ensure that the provisions of multiple legal systems, where they exist, comply with international human rights obligations, commitments and principles, including the principle of non-discrimination;

e. Ensure that women and children have full and equal access to effective legal protection against violations, including through domestic mechanisms of justice which are monitored and revised to ensure that they function without discrimination, as set out under all conventions related to human rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

f. Mainstream gender perspectives into all legislation, policies and programmes and promote incorporation of gender-responsive budgeting processes across all areas and at all levels, and enhance international cooperation to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS;

g. Establish concrete goals and benchmarks and adopt positive actions and temporary special measures, as appropriate, to enhance women's equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels to further the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men;

h. Strengthen coordination, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in the United Nations system, including its capacity to support Member States in implementation of national policies for the achievement of, and to address under-resourcing in, gender equality and the empowerment of women;

i. Promote understanding between women and men in order to strengthen women's access to resources and decision-making in policies and programmes to support caregiving, including in the context of HIV/AIDS. Ensure that men and boys, whose role is critical in achieving gender equality, are actively involved in policies and programmes that aim to improve the equal sharing of responsibilities with women and girls, so as to foster changes in attitudes and behaviour patterns in order to promote and protect the human rights of women and the girl child;

j. Take appropriate measures to achieve equal sharing of work and parental responsibilities between women and men, including measures to reconcile care and professional life and emphasise men's equal responsibilities with respect to household work;

k. Acknowledge the need to address violence against women holistically, including through the recognition of linkages between violence against women and other issues such as HIV/AIDS, poverty eradication, food security, peace and security, humanitarian assistance, health and crime prevention;

l. Take efforts to devise comprehensive social and cultural strategies, including policies and programmes, that acknowledge the societal and individual value of adequate care for all and provide both women and men full and equal human development opportunities;

m. Take measures to protect and address the needs of women and girls in situations of humanitarian emergencies, in particular those carrying a disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities;

n. Design, strengthen and implement national development plans and strategies, including poverty eradication strategies, with the full and effective participation of women and girls, including in decision-making, that reduce the feminisation of poverty and HIV/AIDS, to enhance the capacity of women and girls and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts of globalisation;

o. Design, implement and promote family friendly policies and services, including affordable, accessible and quality care services for children and other dependants, parental and other leave schemes and campaigns to sensitise public opinion and other relevant actors on equal sharing of employment and family responsibilities between women and men;

p. Promote greater understanding and recognition that caregiving is a critical societal function and should be equally shared between women and men within the family and households and strengthen dialogue and coordination between all relevant stakeholders;

q. Measure, in quantitative and qualitative terms, unremunerated work that is outside national accounts, in order to better reflect its value in such accounts, and recognise and take necessary measures to incorporate the value and cost of unpaid work within and between households and society at large in policies, strategies, plans and budgets across all relevant sectors;

- r. Measure, in quantitative terms, unremunerated work that is outside national accounts, to accurately assess and reflect its value in satellite or other official accounts that are separate from but consistent with core national accounts;
- s. Adopt, implement and monitor gender-sensitive policies and programmes to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights, social protection, and decent working conditions of both paid and unpaid caregivers;
- t. Adopt, implement, evaluate, and where necessary, review, gender-sensitive legislation and policies that promote balance between paid work and family responsibilities, reduce occupational and sectoral segregation, advance equal remuneration, and ensure that workers with flexible arrangements are not discriminated against;
- u. Ensure that women and men have access to maternity, paternity, parental and/or other forms of leave, and consider providing incentives to men to avail themselves of such leave for caregiving purposes, and take measures to protect women and men against dismissal, and guarantee their right to resume the same or equivalent post after utilizing such leave;
- v. Ensure that social protection measures such as health insurance, child and family allowances and information on these benefits are widely available and accessible, and that these measures do not reinforce gender biases, that workers are not discriminated against when they avail themselves of the benefits available, and that these benefits are regularly reviewed to target all workers, including, as appropriate, in the informal sector;
- w. Develop and improve sustainable and adequate social protection and/or insurance schemes, including pension and savings schemes, that meet basic minimum needs, and recognise leave periods for caregiving in the calculation of respective benefits;
- x. Strengthen efforts to protect the rights and ensure decent work conditions for all domestic workers, including women migrant domestic workers, in, inter alia, their working hours and wages, and to improve their access to health-care services and other social and economic benefits;
- y. Take measures to address the special needs of girls, including migrant girls, employed as domestic workers and caregivers, as well as those that have to perform excessive domestic chores and caregiving responsibilities, and to provide access to education, vocational training, health services, food, shelter and recreation, while ensuring the prevention and elimination of child labour and economic exploitation of girls;
- z. Develop gender-sensitive measures, including national action plans, where appropriate, to eliminate the worst forms of child labour;
- aa. Strengthen education, health and social services and effectively utilise resources to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and ensure women's and girls' rights to education at all levels and the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as quality, affordable and universally accessible primary health care and services, as well as sex education based on full and accurate information in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of girls and boys, and with appropriate direction and guidance;
- bb. Develop and/or expand, and adequately resource, the provision of equitable, quality, accessible and affordable care and support services for all people needing care, including through community-based support systems, while ensuring that such services meet the needs of both caregivers and care recipients, bearing in mind the increased labour mobility of women and men, and, where applicable, kinship and extended family responsibilities, and the importance of adequate nutrition;
- cc. Assess and respond to the needs for integrated human resources at all levels of the health system, in order to achieve MDG 6 and the targets of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, and take actions, as appropriate, to effectively govern the recruitment, training, deployment and retention of skilled health personnel in the prevention, treatment, care and support for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS;
- dd. Ensure that adequate investments are made to strengthen efforts through, inter alia, the allocation of resources to provide quality, accessible and affordable public services, including education, health and other social services which incorporate gender equality as a basic principle;
- ee. Increase the availability, access to, and use of critical public infrastructure, such as transportation, the provision of a safe, reliable and clean water supply, sanitation, energy, telecommunications and affordable housing programmes, in particular in poverty-stricken and rural areas, to reduce the burden of care on households;
- ff. Significantly scale up efforts towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010, and the goal to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, and ensure that those efforts promote gender equality and take into account the caregiving responsibilities of both women and men;
- gg. Reaffirm that the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is an essential element of the global response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and ensure that in all national policies and programmes designed to provide comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support, particular attention and support is given to women and girls at risk of, infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, including young and adolescent mothers, and recognise that, inter alia, preventing and reducing stigma and discrimination, eradicating poverty and mitigating the impact of underdevelopment are critical elements to achieve the internationally agreed goals in this regard;
- hh. Reaffirm that access to medication in the context of pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS, is one of the fundamental elements to achieve progressively the full realisation of the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health;

ii. Recognise the increased feminization of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and ensure that existing HIV/AIDS policies, strategies, resources and programmes at all levels be reviewed and adapted to ensure that they contribute to empowering women and reducing their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS;

jj. Integrate gender perspectives into national HIV/AIDS policies, programmes as well as into national monitoring and evaluation systems, taking into account the caregiving responsibilities of both women and men, including in community, family and home-based care, and ensure the full and active participation of caregivers, in particular women, including those living with HIV/AIDS, in decision-making processes;

kk. Develop multisectoral policies and programmes and identify, strengthen and take all necessary measures to address the needs of women and girls, including older women and widows, infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, and those providing unpaid caregiving, especially women and girls heading households, for, inter alia, social and legal protection, increased access to financial and economic resources including micro-credit and sustainable economic opportunities, education including opportunities to continue education, as well as access to health services, including affordable antiretroviral treatment, and nutritional support;

ll. Emphasise the importance of HIV prevention as a long-term strategy to reduce the number of new HIV infections and, consequently, to reduce the burden of caregiving responsibilities on both women and men through universal access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care, and support programmes, including sexual and reproductive health and services, and to increase access to voluntary and confidential counselling and HIV testing, investments in HIV/AIDS and sex education and awareness, based on full and accurate information in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, with appropriate direction and guidance, research and development of, and access to, new, safe, quality and affordable HIV/AIDS prevention products, diagnostics, medicines and treatment commodities, including female-controlled methods, and new preventive technologies and microbicides and AIDS vaccines;

mm. Strengthen, expand, improve, and promote the accessibility of quality comprehensive public health care and services, including community-based health services specifically related to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, including for people with disabilities, as well as hospital and hospice-based care, and psycho-social support services, and increase the number of professional healthcare providers, especially in rural areas, to alleviate the current burden on women and girls who provide unpaid care services in the context of HIV/AIDS;

nn. Design and implement programmes, including awareness-raising programmes, to promote the active involvement of men and boys in eliminating gender stereotypes as well as gender inequality and gender-based violence and abuse, and educate men, including young men, to understand their role and responsibility in the spread of HIV/AIDS and in matters related to their sexuality, reproduction, child-rearing and the promotion of equality between women and men and girls and boys and enable women and men to adopt safe, and responsible, noncoercive

sexual and reproductive behaviour, including increased access to an appropriate and comprehensive package of prevention programmes and support, to prevent the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, including through increased access to education, including in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, for young people, and encourage the full participation of men and boys in caregiving, prevention, treatment, support and impact evaluation programmes;

oo. Develop and implement appropriate policies and programmes to address stereotypical attitudes and behaviours to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men across the life cycle;

pp. Develop gender sensitive education and training programmes, including for educators at all levels, aimed at eliminating discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls and men and boys, to address gender stereotypes in the context of equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS;

qq. Take measures to increase the participation of men in caregiving both within households and in care professions, such as information and awareness campaigns, education and training, school curriculum, peer programmes and government policies to promote men's participation and responsibilities as fathers and caregivers, and to encourage men and boys to become agents of change in promoting the human rights of women and in challenging gender stereotypes, particularly as they relate to men's roles in parenting and infant development;

rr. Address gender stereotypes in the context of equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men by encouraging media to promote gender equality and the non-stereotypical portrayal of women and girls and men and boys, and by carrying out and publishing research on views especially of men and boys, on gender equality and perceptions of gender roles, as well as by assessing the impact of efforts undertaken in achieving gender equality;

ss. Develop strategies to eliminate gender stereotypes in all spheres of life, including in public and political life, and foster the positive portrayal of women and girls as leaders and decision-makers at all levels and in all areas, to achieve the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men;

tt. Encourage and support men and boys to take an active part in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence, especially gender-based violence, including by developing strategies to eliminate gender stereotypes and by developing programmes that promote respectful relationships, and rehabilitate perpetrators as part of a strategy of zero tolerance for violence against women and girls;

uu. Conduct research and collect sex- and age-disaggregated data and develop gender-sensitive indicators, as appropriate, to inform policy making, conduct assessments in a coordinated manner, and measure progress in the sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including in the context of HIV/AIDS, and identify the obstacles and stereotypes men may face in assuming increased caregiving responsibilities;

vv. Strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices and, when necessary, measurement systems, to effectively collect comprehensive information on all categories of activities, including through time-use surveys, to inform policy development that facilitates the sharing of unpaid work between women and men;

ww. Enhance collection and dissemination of statistics on the relative participation of women and men in leadership roles in public office and in strategic economic, social and political decision-making positions, in order to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in these spheres;

xx. Adopt appropriate measures to overcome negative impacts of the economic and financial crisis, including on women and girls, and integrate a gender perspective into these measures so that they equally benefit women and men, while seeking to maintain whenever possible adequate levels of funding for gender equality and the empowerment of women;

yy. Take all appropriate measures to integrate women, on an equal basis with men, in decision-making regarding sustainable resource management and the development of policies and programmes for sustainable development, including to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women, including their displacement from income-generating activities, which greatly adds to unremunerated work, such as caregiving, and negatively impacts on their health, well-being and quality of life, particularly those whose livelihoods and daily subsistence depend directly on sustainable ecosystems;

zz. Allocate adequate financial resources at the international level for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Plan of Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, in developing countries, especially through the strengthening of their national capacities;

aaa. Strengthen international cooperation in order to assist in the development of human resources for health, through technical assistance and training, as well as to increase universal access to health services, including in remote and rural areas, taking into account the challenges facing developing countries in the retention of skilled health personnel;

bbb. Urge developed countries that have not yet done so, in accordance with their commitments, to make concrete efforts towards meeting the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national product to least developed countries, and encourage developing countries to build on the progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help meet development goals and targets and, inter alia, to assist them in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

*The Agreed Conclusions may also be downloaded from*

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw53/AC%20adopted%2013%20March%20advance%20unedited%20version.pdf>

## 53<sup>RD</sup> CSW...

*from page 1*

It stated that: “The rising impact of HIV/AIDS has severely impacted on women and girls as HIV/AIDS now bears a young woman's face. The recent report of the AIDS Commission in Asia states that there are an estimated 75 million men who buy sex from about 10 million women. This has made women extremely vulnerable to HIV, and spousal or partner transmission is now rapidly increasing across Asia.”

Citing data from Thailand and Burma where 80 to 90 per cent of HIV-infected women are in monogamous relationships, the Caucus added, “Spousal transmission is fueled by traditional patriarchal societal attitudes that put women at a disadvantage in the household, thereby disabling them from negotiating in sexual relationships.”

The Asia Pacific Caucus also stresses the need for community controlled and culturally appropriate responses to the unequal sharing of responsibility between women and men.

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One of the Agreed Conclusions tasked governments to, “take efforts to devise comprehensive social and cultural strategies, including policies and programmes that acknowledge the societal and individual value of adequate care for all and provide both women and men full and equal human development opportunities.”

The document also called for policies and programmes which target the participation of men and boys as caregivers. It also affirmed the need to address gender stereotypes especially among media organisations.

The Agreed Conclusions affirmed the need to develop and strengthen policies and programmes on sexual and reproductive health for women and girls as well sex education that is “based on full and accurate information in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of girls and boys.”

Delegates from Italy, Latin America, Japan, Senegal and Armenia were elected for the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW session which will focus on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) on its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

# Statement submitted by the Asia Pacific Caucus at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission of the Status of Women

*Delivered by Ms. Shuwen He of the All China Women's Federation on 9 March 2009*

I am pleased to take the floor at the 53rd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, on behalf of the Asia Pacific Caucus which represents 60 per cent of the population in the Asia-Pacific region.

The priority theme addressing the unequal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in both the public and private spheres is one that is very much a reflection of our own concerns. In the context of the Asia-Pacific region, the issues of HIV/AIDS continues to be a major concern, not only because of the debilitating impact it has on our societies and on our economies, but because of the debilitating impact it has on the lives of women and girls. The care of the elderly is another extremely critical area of concern. Notions of traditional and cultural practices that result in unequal sharing of responsibilities within the family and households lead to women having to bear the major burden for care giving and often excludes men.

The rising impact of HIV/AIDS has severely impacted on women and girls as HIV/AIDS now bears a young woman's face. The recent report of the AIDS Commission in Asia states that there are an estimated 75 million men who buy sex from about 10 million women. This has made women extremely vulnerable to HIV, and spousal or partner transmission is now rapidly increasing across Asia. Data from Thailand and Myanmar indicates that about 80 to 90 per cent of HIV-infected women are in monogamous relationships. Spousal transmission is fueled by traditional patriarchal societal attitudes that put women at a disadvantage in the household, thereby disabling them from negotiating in sexual relationships.

However, HIV/AIDS response by governments remains predicated on the assumption that only "high risk" groups (men who have sex with men (msm), prostituted men and women, drug dependents) should be protected and, has left women victims of spousal and partner transmission in the margins of public health support.

Legal frameworks combine with societal attitudes rooted in culture, tradition and customary practices to discriminate against women and restrict women's and girls' rights to enjoy full citizenship. In such environments, stereotypes of the roles of men and women impede full and effective participation of men in care giving and leads to women who are HIV positive receiving less care than men.

In addition, it is most often women and girls who become the primary care-givers to those living with HIV/AIDS. This situation is made even more complex when one takes into consideration issues such as class, race, age, marital status, membership of a minority or marginalised community, sexual orientation and gender identity that also play a role in all these cases. The Asia Pacific Caucus affirms that creating a climate in which men and women share care-giving responsibilities could transform the lives of many women for the better. Without equal division of labour between women and men or the achievement of gender equality will remain elusive.

While a few countries have started to provide socialised care services for the elderly, there remains inadequate training and support to enhance cadre of quality professional care-givers. Better and effective policies are also required to address the issue of migrant care workers whose numbers are expected to grow in the Asia Pacific region.

The Agreed Conclusions currently fail to reflect the need for community controlled and culturally appropriate responses to the unequal sharing of responsibility between women and men. They also fail to acknowledge the impact of the global financial crisis on the achievement of gender equality.

National Human Rights Institutions have a role to play in supporting women and girls, through independent monitoring and reporting at the United Nations level.

The Asia Pacific Caucus urges States to:

- 1. Address the broader issues of discrimination and violence against women and as a first step in this direction, affirm their commitment to the full realisation of women's human rights by lifting reservations on CEDAW.*
- 2. Integrate the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women in the public and private sphere into all programmes and policies.*
- 3. Ensure that care-giving is well positioned in all policy and funding frameworks, include caregivers as decision-makers, monitors and evaluators of resources and programmes and, that such policies recognise, affirm and support community and family caregivers.*
- 4. Create programmes and activities that include and affirm male involvement in care-giving.*
- 5. Ensure access to social protection including universal social pensions and benefits to support caregivers and ensure safety nets are put in place to provide medical and nursing care for the elderly.*
- 6. Resource public health care services to support a continuum of care through better co-ordination with, and support, of community based organisations providing home-based care, including through task-shifting and referral systems.*
- 7. Undertake national analysis of women's contributions in care-giving and its role in the economy*
- 8. Ensure that women are not disproportionately affected by the Global Financial Crisis or that measures are taken to ameliorate the impact and that governments do not cut funding to gender equality programmes.*
- 9. Institute effective legislation and policies to facilitate increasing women's political participation and representation and the increase in funds for women's leadership programmes*
- 10. Promote partnerships with civil society, faith based organisations, the United Nations and organizations of HIV positive people to increase capacity for care and support.*
- 11. Recognise the independent participation of National Human Rights Institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles to achieve gender equality and adopt modalities for their independent participation at CSW in line with the UN Human Rights Council procedures.*
- 12. Support a strengthened UN Gender Entity with a policy and programme mandate and universal country level presence for effectively improving the lives of women on the ground.*

# Web Crackdown in Thailand...

from page 1

Ungpakorn's younger brother Giles Ji Ungpakorn has already fled to the United Kingdom after being charged with violations of lese majeste with the publication of his book, *A Coup for the Rich*.

Meanwhile, the Thai Netizen Network (TNN), Campaign for Popular Media Reform (CPMR) and Freedom Against Censorship Thailand (FACT) have been monitoring the government's implementation of the Computer-related Crime Act of 2007, especially the arrests which have been made in the name of lese majeste.

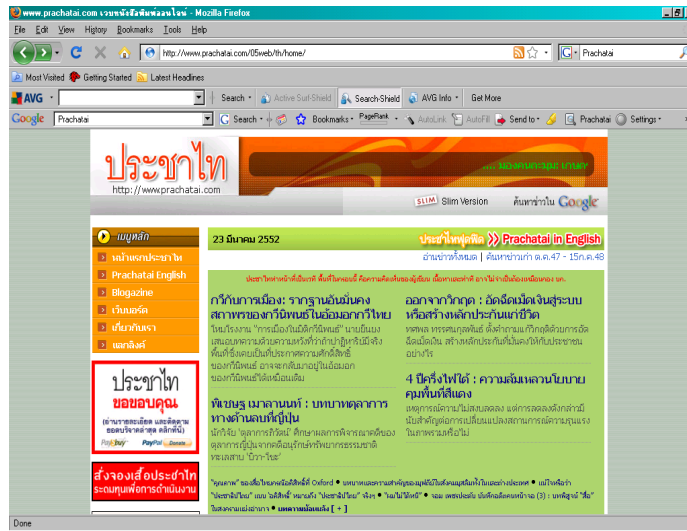
Media activist Supinya Klangnarong asserted, "Despite the government's claim that the arrest was made in accordance with the law, it was in effect a case of government using legally sanctioned powers to threaten and intimidate the freedom and rights of online news media.

In a we! interview last January 2009, Klangnarong articulated the connections between the apparently strong enforcement of lese majeste laws and the legitimacy of the current Premier. In December 2008, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) staged a strike in Bangkok's major airports as part of the long-running middle class-driven pressure to oust then Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat.

Wongsawat is the brother in law of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinatwatra, whose unexplained wealth, media repression, and crackdown in the South, among others triggered the formation of the PAD. PAD's success has been largely attributed to the support of the monarchy.

As Klangnarong remarked, "There was an interest in measures like this [lese majeste] before. But this time is more significant because they want to show that they protect the monarchy."

Section 14 of the Computer-related Crime Act of 2007 prohibits the uploading of false data, pornographic materials and other data that may undermine national security. Section 14 has also been used in apprehending websites which otherwise contain materials that criticise the royalty.



One of Thailand's progressive online media, Prachatai was established as a watchdog during the Thaksin administration, which saw soaring influence and wealth of the Thai Rak Thai Party and increasing repression in the media and the South. URL: <http://www.prachatai.com>

A few months ago, Thailand hogged the headlines as it charged prominent individuals such as the younger Ungpakorn and Australian author Harry Nicolaidis with lese majeste.

The authorities also detained at least two individuals who allegedly posted negative comments on the King on their websites.

Similarly, a group of high-profile activists and academicians sent a letter to Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, asking him to put an end to suppressive measures against individuals, websites and the peaceful ideas; reform lese majeste laws; and consider withdrawing current lese majeste charges.

Signed by Arjun Appadurai, Noam Chomsky, Arif Dirlik, Susan Stanford Friedman, Stuart Hall, and Immanuel Wallerstein, among others, the letter noted, "The frequent abuse of the lese majeste law against political opponents undermines democratic processes. Instead of protecting reputations, these lese majeste cases generate heightened criticism of the monarchy and Thailand itself, both inside and outside the country."

Pemchaiporn was released on the same day, with the guarantee of Professor Chantana Wankaew of Chulalongkorn University. TNN, CPMR, FACT and other civil liberty groups was also granted an audience with the prime minister on 11 March 2009.

According to Klangnarong, he recognised the police's mistake in arresting Pemchaiporn. He also agreed to set up a task force composed of some members of the Thai internet community and the authorities.

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## Monrovia Declaration

*Editor's Note: The International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security was held from 7 to 8 March 2009 in Monrovia, Liberia, with the primary goal of analysing the current implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.*

We, who came together for the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, have joined together under the inspiring leadership of the co-conveners, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and H.E. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, to celebrate and draw strength from women's leadership at all levels.

We recall the spirit of women's conferences, started in Mexico City and continuing through Copenhagen, Nairobi, and Beijing, and other African regional and global gatherings, and the reaffirmation of women's rights exemplified in the Beijing Platform of Action, African regional instruments and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW).

We honour the great strides women have made since then to achieve leadership positions in international arenas and close to home. We note that women in the 21st century hold high-level positions and at the same time do extraordinary work at the community level.

We came together as leaders celebrating our achievements, solidifying our commitment to work together for change, reassessing our efforts, and strategising to achieve greater success.

We stand in solidarity with our sisters in Darfur, Zimbabwe, and conflict areas around the world. We commit our energies to accelerating the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.

The aspirations we hold as women and men coming together in Monrovia are not satisfied by the policies and practices we see all around us. We therefore shaped the Colloquium around thematic priorities that, if acted upon, would make a fundamental and sustained improvement in the lives of women and girls and their communities.

Having convened this historic event, we now make a collective call for profound changes in the priorities that shape policies and resource allocations from the global to the local level, and demand accountability from the institutions and individuals who must effect these changes.

We recognise that we are living through multiple global crises that are threatening our security at all levels and have a devastating impact on the lives of girls and women all over the world. What is now required is a paradigm shift in our approach to global security and development that puts women at the center of social and economic policies and political change.

It has been demonstrated that women are particularly vulnerable to reductions in exports, foreign direct investment and remittances.

As countries put in place their economic stimulus packages for development, we call on governments to target women's economic empowerment. Specifically, we urge leaders of the G20 countries who will be meeting in London on 2 April 2009 to agree on coordinated action aimed at reviving the global economy to:

- Earmark funds for women in all responses to the financial crisis including recovery and stimulus packages; and
- Ensure appropriate delivery mechanisms are in place and functioning to channel trade financing to women.

We call for full implementation of UNSCR 1325 for the protection, participation and promotion of women's rights and their involvement in peace processes, and the adoption of UNSCR 1820 that addresses sexual violence as a tactic of war.

We call for greater accountability and an end to impunity – only this will accelerate implementation by all stakeholders, principally the UN Member States, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. We call on them to present their plans of action and accomplishments at the 2010 Ministerial Review Conference of UNSCR 1325.

We further encourage countries to collaborate creatively and support each other on the development and implementation of National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325.

We commit to honor women's leadership at all levels of community and public life, and through our actions and decisions to enable women leaders, in particular young women, to take up roles of leadership and responsibility.

We call for greater numbers of women in positions of leadership – we have witnessed that more women results in better decision-making by governments and communities. It has been demonstrated that the discourse changes with their involvement, and we want to see these changes sustained.

In this context, we support initiatives to increase women's representation in the European Union to 50 per cent of decision-makers. Liberia and Finland, the co-conveners of the Colloquium, exemplify women's supportive leadership.

We call for greater efforts to enable and empower women to participate fully and on fair terms in the economic life of their communities, removing barriers and increasing their capacity in trade and business activity from the local to the global level.

Women need better access to information and to improvements in infrastructure and services, particularly for women with disabilities, as well as social protection systems, especially in times of economic crisis and recession.

*Read more on page 2*

## Monrovia Declaration...

from page 9

Women and men deserve the right to decent work opportunities in the formal and informal economy. Women's rights must be respected in the workplace and within value chains, in companies of all sizes, and no matter how far across the world they reach.

We commit to ensure that women will be present, and their voices heard, in all debates concerning climate change, with a particular commitment to women's participation in the global climate change summit in Copenhagen in December 2009.

We call for far greater urgency in addressing the mitigation and adaptation aspects of climate change - otherwise we risk undermining all our efforts to date on eradicating poverty and suffering. An acknowledgement of women's roles as powerful agents of change, and their greater vulnerability to climate change impacts in many societies, must be demonstrated through women's greater role in climate change negotiations and incorporation of gender considerations in the new agreement, as well as in international, national, and local strategies and programmes implementing this agreement.

To better protect women and girls who are displaced, to uphold the dignity of migrants, and to enhance the social and economic integration of migrant women and men alike, we call for a gender equality approach to migration management. Policies and programs must integrate the needs of migrant women and support migrant women in diaspora communities to engage in development efforts through their skills, knowledge, and financial resources.

The leadership of young people, and especially young women, is critical to advancing development, peace and security. The participation of young people is a prerequisite to the development of communities and nations.

Young people are the inheritors of decisions made today which affect the future. We commit to the inclusion of young women and young men in decision-making processes and leadership and in all processes that work towards the achievement of the MDGs. We therefore call for:

- Urgent investment to support young women and young men in the achievement of the MDGs including women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- The creation of supportive spaces which enable the leadership development of young women.

We further commit to unite and mobilise our collective leadership to end violence against women and especially young women. We call for safe environments for women and girls who have experienced violence and abuse. We commit to work collaboratively with women's organisations and networks.

Lastly, through the launch of the Angie Brooks International Center on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security on 8 March 2009, the Colloquium has put in place a mechanism of follow-up action to the Colloquium.

We thank participants for the recommendations that came out of the thematic discussions and working groups which will be passed to the Angie Brooks International Center for implementation. We call on potential collaborators and institutions to partner with us in the programs and activities of the Center.

If these calls are met with action, not empty promises, the future will be brighter for every girl, every woman, every grandmother, and for the men who share their aspirations and their life journeys.

## Repro Bill in the Philippines ...

from page 11

Lagman was among the guest speakers in the forum, Academe Meets Government on the Reproductive Health Bill was organised by the Third World Studies Center of the University of the Philippines on 6 March 2009 in Quezon City, Philippines.

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## Staying Alive: Reproductive Health Bill in the Philippines

by Nina Somera

Myrna Castelo, 38 counts herself as one of Manila's urban poor. Last Christmas was a blessing as she gave birth to a healthy baby girl.

She could have lost her baby as the city's health centre refused her, saying that this was already her eighth pregnancy and therefore, she should have prepared beforehand. She delivered her child in their small shack, promising again to herself that this will be her last.

Myrna's story is just one of the founding blocks behind the Reproductive Health bill (House Bill 5043) that is now being debated at the Philippines' House of Representatives. Her story is indeed backed by past and recent academic studies and surveys on reproductive health, family planning and sex education, which are also among the bill's most contentious provisions.

In 2008, 54 per cent of 3.4 million pregnancies are unwanted. Such unwanted pregnancies resulted in 560,000 induced abortions. While women's wanted fertility is 3.8 per cent, actual fertility stood at 5.9 per cent, with a third of all births having short spacing. Meanwhile 45 per cent of people of reproductive age had unmet needs in terms of pills, intra-uterine device and other reproductive health information and services. Similarly, more than 23 per cent of young people, ages 15 to 24, have had early sexual intercourse but lacked access to reproductive health information and services.

As University of the Philippines Population Institute Prof. Josefina Cabigon remarked, "These data only shows the insufficient protection against the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases."

Citing the National Demographics Health Survey (NDHS), which is conducted every four years, economist Ernesto Pernia added that, "The poor have been asking for a reproductive health policy since 1968." The World Health Organisation (WHO) also revealed that maternal mortality rate in the country is pegged at 1 to 100 births, compared with another staunchly Catholic Ireland, with 1 to 48,000 births.

House Bill 5043 has been branded as anti-life, accused of promoting abortion. The bill, however, is clear: "While nothing in this Act changes the law on abortion, as abortion remains a crime and is punishable, the government shall ensure that women seeking care for post-abortion complications shall be treated and counseled in a humane, non-judgmental and compassionate manner."

House Bill 5043 principal author Representative Edcel Lagman is confident that the present Congress will pass the bill, which had been repeatedly filed in previous government administrations and congressional calendars, given the pressure of the Catholic Church.

*There is a realisation that the bill is long overdue. There is now a wide multi-sectoral support, which was not pronounced before.*

Asked about the present conditions that can allow passage of the bill, Lagman pointed out the general pulse of the population, the support of other churches, the Senate and the Cabinet:

"There is a realisation that the bill is long overdue. There is now a wide multi-sectoral support, which was not pronounced before. Catholic Church is not united. Many are silent but supportive but generally, it is ambivalent. A very similar bill is also being readied at the Senate. All Cabinet members are supportive except the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)," he explained.

DENR is headed by Lito Atienza, Manila's former mayor who imposed natural family planning, banning contraceptives and other reproductive health services for eight years. He is a close ally of the Catholic Church. Today, a class suit against him is pending as the policy has grossly affected the city's residents, 70 per cent living below the poverty.

Moreover, Manila has become a case for political will for reproductive health as well as a demystification of the Catholic Church's political power. In the latest national survey by the Social Weather Station, 90 per cent agrees that the city must provide reproductive health services while 88 percent believes that a policy on reproductive health is in order.

Sixty-two per cent of the respondents, mostly Catholics shares that the church has indeed been interfering in the affairs of the government, particularly in the issues of reproductive health and family planning.

As of 2008, 67 out of 122 local chief executives have created reproductive health policies and programmes. Sixty-four of them are using their own budgets.

Lagman shared, "It is a shame that the national government is lagging behind local government units in reproductive health policies. In any case, it is still better to have a national and comprehensive law. Whatever the idiosyncracies of local government officials are, there will always be reproductive health policies and programmes."

Although Lagman is hopeful, some feminists expressed fear over the delaying tactics of some politicians. This concern is also bolstered by the upcoming national elections, as politicians tend to kowtow to demands of possible allies.

Lagman nonetheless assured, "The prospects are encouraging. We have sufficient numbers but it is a matter of time." The bill needs to be approved by two-thirds of the current 238 members of the House.

He also downplayed the kingmaking power of the Church, citing surveys saying that 70 per cent will vote for candidates who support the reproductive health bill. "When I won the post, I felt that I did not defeat the opposition but the Catholic hierarchy. There is no Catholic vote."

*Read more on page 10*

## Israel Elections...

from page 1

Kadima won by a slight margin, with 28 seats, compared with Likud, 27 seats and Yisrael Beytenu, 15. A seat is equivalent to two percent of a national vote.

Since none gained the minimum 61 out of 120 seats at the Knesset, Israeli President Shimon Peres tasked Netanyahu, who has the support of the majority of the current parliament to form a coalition. While he managed to convince Yisrael Beytenu, Kadima and the Labour parties decided not to join coalition.

This configuration confirms the emergence of an extremely Right-wing government and the fears of a more tense relationship with Palestine.

Israeli feminists and activists usually vote for small but leftist parties but many this time voted for the centrist party Kadima, whose candidate is among the architects of the Gaza war.

Feminist peace activist Gila Svirsky admitted, "This may seem strange because Livni was never an avowed feminist and, in fact, she was particularly brutal in waging the war in Gaza. Despite these two big strikes against her, Livni was also the only one of the main candidates who promised to negotiate the end of the occupation and a two-state solution."

Kadima is also said to be open on withdrawing Israel's claims on the Golan Heights which borders Israel, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Meanwhile, Likud opposes division of Jerusalem and withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Yisrael Beytenu is even more radical, supporting the Jewish settlements in what is supposed to be Palestinian land.

The coalition Netanyahu is forming is also likely to be unpopular, especially given Lieberman's background and the membership of fundamentalist religious parties. Lieberman has been accused to be racists in his pronouncements against Palestinians. He openly proposed subjecting Arab Israelis to a loyalty tests before the latter obtain their Israeli citizenship. Lieberman touted them as a "worse threat than Hamas." Arab Israelis comprise 20 per cent of Israel's population or 1.3 million.

Lieberman is also accused of bribery, fraud, breach of confidence and other cases which are linked to his party's recent election campaigns. In mid-March, Lieberman accepted the Netanyahu's proposal of becoming the next foreign minister.

But there might be an opportunity with the partnership of Likud and Yisrael Betytenu. As Svirsky pointed out, "My own preference is that Kadima and Labor stay out of the coalition. I believe this would hasten the demise of the right-wing government that would result, as it will not have the support of the western powers."

In the meantime though, less can be expected from a peace process with Palestine which has yet to recover from the disproportionate attacks of Israel launched for three weeks beginning on 27 December 2008. The war left much of the Strip destroyed and more than 1,000 Gazans killed.

As *Al Jazeera's* Mike Hanna commented, "It's very difficult to see anything but a long period of wrangling and anger as well as little progress in peace negotiations." Svirsky added, "Indeed, our relations with Iran could become extremely volatile under Netanyahu. So long as Netanyahu is the prime minister, don't expect any relief on the major issues, even with an Obama administration."



The Gaza war was among the deciding factors in the recent Israeli elections. Photo from Wikipedia Commons.

United States president Barack Obama has been criticised for being relatively silent on Israel's atrocities in Gaza. However his administration has been attributed as the reason for the "end" of the Gaza war as the ceasefire was brokered two days before his inauguration as president. A more sophisticated diplomacy is also expected from the US into the peace process between Israel and Palestine.

But Svirsky is not quite optimistic, asserting, "The U.S. does not have serious power over Israel, not even the US\$3 billion in foreign aid annually. Why? Because virtually all of that money must be spent on the purchase of US-made arms. That's a perk that the military-industrial complex in the US just won't give up."

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## Pakistan's airwaves: On militant turf, Radio Khyber offers a softer voice

By Huma Yusuf

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published in the Christian Science Monitor on 13 March 2009. We shortened it for space considerations. Its complete version can be found in URL: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0313/p01s01-wosc.html>*

Peshawar, Pakistan - Kishwar yanks at her veil, caught in the sound equipment of a cramped radio production studio, and pins it back. "It's hard to be the voice of anything with all this cloth on my face," she jokes, alluding to her station's tag line, "The Voice of Khyber."

Kishwar, who, like others in this story, asked to have her last name withheld for security, is one of 15 reporters for Radio Khyber, a rare nonextremist station broadcasting in the town of Jamrud, in the militant stronghold of Pakistan's northwestern tribal areas. Airwaves in this region are filled with the illegal broadcasts of "FM mullahs" preaching about "holy war" and recruiting fighters.

Radio Khyber, launched in 2006 with government support, provides an alternative to the hard-line clerics with its medley of local news, talk shows, and music. But it treads carefully, trying to avoid backlash from either the militants – who criticise the playing of music – or the Pakistani government, which dislikes its news coverage in this sensitive region.

"Until Radio Khyber started news reporting, the FM mullahs were winning the dial wars," says Aurangzaib Khan, the manager of Media Development at Internews Pakistan in Peshawar, an international nonprofit that trains radio journalists and lobbies for free media.

Radio Khyber broadcasts for three hours each in the morning and evening. When it first started, the government – represented in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas by the FATA Secretariat – mandated that Radio Khyber simply broadcast Pakistani pop songs and use news reports from the state-owned Radio Pakistan.

*"Every day, we're scared that a political agent will arbitrarily shut us down for doing more than entertainment programming. The last thing the Pakistani government needs is for us to have a voice of our own."*

But the station's staff soon found that mix insufficient. "We knew we had to do something more – we had to get news out and we had to hear what people needed to say," says Tayyab, Radio Khyber's news editor.

These days, the station offers call-in talk shows, news bulletins phoned in from reporters across Khyber, and feature programs on health, education, women's rights, and security – all in local dialects of the Pashto language. Sandwiched in between are short bursts of religious programming – sermons and Koranic recitations. Occasional songs by tribal musicians and the verses of local poets also liven up the mix.

"We have to promote our local culture," says Nazir, a station director. But news bulletins, which began last September while the Army was conducting operations against militants in the area, are the most popular items, he says. "In times of crisis, people want to hear what's happening down the road, not what's happening in Peshawar, Islamabad, Mumbai [formerly Bombay], or Washington."

Radio Khyber's local programming is helping to fill an information vacuum, says Mr. Khan, of Internews Pakistan. "People in FATA are a captive radio audience. The cable television infrastructure here is poorly developed and shunned for being un-Islamic." As a result, those who "rule the airwaves are the winners," he explains.

The Pashto-language broadcasts of Radio Pakistan are not transmitted throughout FATA, Khan adds. In any case, "where they are heard, they're viewed with suspicion because they promote the national viewpoint without acknowledging the diversity of listenership."

Residents of FATA are thus forced to choose between Radio Azadi, the Afghan Service of Radio Free Europe that broadcasts from Afghanistan, and the illegal transmissions of FM mullahs.

Not surprisingly, many are calling in to Radio Khyber instead. In January, when an Army operation led to the closure of the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan, people called in from the tribal areas to discuss security along major highways.

In less trying times, people call to compare dialects, describe recent trips to Peshawar or Swat, and wax nostalgic about the tribal areas before the Taliban. These days, Radio Khyber regularly receives calls asking about developments in the standoff between militants and the military. Displaced FATA residents call from Peshawar to ask about happenings in their home villages.

Women also call to request songs and ask security-related questions, but prefer not to be named on the air. "We run women's requests under men's names," says Tayyab. "But in a place where women can't be seen, it's important that they're trying to be heard." Radio Khyber's three female reporters are on the air frequently.

Kishwar says that while her parents and brother disapprove of strange men hearing her voice, she tries to broadcast daily reports "so that we can get more women's voices on air."

Indeed, the station seems more concerned with not offending the government. Since the tribal areas are governed by the frontier crimes regulation, rather than the Pakistani Constitution, free speech is not guaranteed or protected.

"Every day, we're scared that a political agent [of the FATA Secretariat] will arbitrarily shut us down for doing more than entertainment programming," says Tayyab. "The last thing the [Pakistani] government needs is for us to have a voice of our own."

Despite their worries about both the FATA Secretariat and FM mullahs, Radio Khyber's journalists are pushing on. "When we were doing entertainment programming, the people called us singers [which is derogatory in Pashto]," says Nazir. "Now they call us journalists. First, only the mullahs and militant commanders would command respect. But now I do, too."

For her part, Kishwar is mustering up the courage to report on militant activities in the area. "I want to face the danger," she says, "so that my people can know the truth."

## IWD 2009...

from page 15

### China

The All China Women's Federation, together with the United Nations Theme Group on Gender organised a forum dubbed, "Investing in Women and Girls" on 5 March 2009 in Beijing, China. The forum featured a paper delivered by Liu Bohong of the Women's Studies Institute of China on the gendered effects of the economic crisis on Chinese women. The forum also presented the successful implementation of projects under the China Gender Facility Awards, which are given to initiatives which result in women's empowerment and gender equality.

### Fiji

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre led the annual Reclaim the Night March on the eve of the International Women's Day. The women reiterated their calls, demanding an end to sexual violence and violence against women.

Source: Fiji Daily Post. (9 March 2009). "The Night is Ours." URL: <http://www.fijidailynews.com/news.php?section=1&fijidailynews=22459>

### India

Women's organisations including Jagori, Sangat and Purogami Mahila Sangathan and their communities convened in New Delhi to celebrate one hundred years of women's struggle that began with Clara Zetkin and other women of the Socialist International. The women decried the negative impacts of the current economic crisis which has hit women the hardest. They also pointed out the slow implementation of legislations on rape, dowry killings and other forms of violence against women.

Source: OneWorld-South Asia. (8 March 2008). "India: Celebrating hundred years of women's struggle." URL: <http://southasia.oneworld.net/todayshadlines/india-celebrating-centenary-of-international-womens-day>

### Japan

In Tokyo, around 900 people joined the International Women's Day central rally under the slogan, "Stop the job market collapse and destruction of people's living conditions! Stand up for a bright future! Let the Japanese Constitution guide!" A huge rally, attended by 500 participants was also organised in Sapporo City in Hokkaido. Similar rallies were organised in the prefectures such as Kochi, Osaka and Gunma.

Source: Japan Press Weekly. (9 March 2009). "International Women's Day rally held across the nation to defend the Japanese Constitution and people's living ." URL: [http://www.japan-press.co.jp/2009/2613/peace\\_2.html](http://www.japan-press.co.jp/2009/2613/peace_2.html)



*Clockwise:  
Kamla Bhasin  
being interviewed  
during a  
Women's Day  
march in India;  
"Reclaim the  
Night March in  
Fiji; Women's  
Day march in  
Nepal. Photos  
from OneWorld-  
South Asia, Fiji  
Daily Post and  
Reforms Network*

### Nepal

Women wore traditional dresses and marched in the capital Kathmandu. This year's celebration adopted the theme "Voice of All Nepalis: Drafting Women-friendly Constitution." Under an interim constitution, Nepali prime minister Prachanda managed to form the new government last year. However he has yet to appoint the head of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. The interim constitution provides 33 per cent of every sector in decision-making processes must be comprised by women. But this quota has not been achieved. The past several months also witnessed the harassment and deaths of women human rights defenders.

Source: Sitaula, Binju. (8 March 2009). "Int'l Women's Day celebrated in Nepal." URL: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/08/content\\_10971070.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/08/content_10971070.htm)

### Pakistan

A rally culminated at the Parliament House. Organised by Pattan Development Organization, Insani Haqooq Itehad and Women Councilors Network, the women demanded an increase in women's participation in decision-making processes in the government. The Asian Commission on Human Rights (ACHR) reported that while the Zardiri government has appointed women in his cabinet, such move has been cancelled out by the appointment of men who have been implicated on crimes against women.

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### Russia

In the city of Kirov, people marked the International Women's Day by holding a demonstration, carrying empty pots and pans. They protested the rising cost commodities while salary levels remain unchanged. One hundred demonstrators ended their march at the city administration building. However, no official came down to dialogue with them.

Source: Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty. (9 March 2009). "Russian Protesters Hold 'Empty Pans' Demonstration." URL: [http://www.rferl.org/content/Protesters\\_In\\_Russian\\_City\\_Hold\\_Empty\\_Pans\\_Demonstration/1506761.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Protesters_In_Russian_City_Hold_Empty_Pans_Demonstration/1506761.html)

## IWD 2009: Women at every turn

by Nina Somera

Scores of women marched on the streets as the world marked the International Women's Day. Many activities centred on the worsening economic crisis whose impact has been most deeply felt by poor women. Women also demanded an end to gender-based discrimination and violence and the recognition of women as equal partners in nation-building and peace-building. We! compiled what was seen and heard on this historic day in the Asia Pacific region.

### Afghanistan

Women in this war torn country wore blue scarves, which symbolise the *burka* or the blue veils which covered women's bodies even after the Taliban regime.

They also came out for a prayer for peace and justice. They called for women's equal participation in the perennial peace process. This marked the first-women led peace action in Afghanistan in years.

Source: UNIFEM. (7 March 2009). "International Women's Day 2009: Wearing Blue Scarves In Solidarity With Afghan Women On IWD." URL: <http://www.feministpeacenetwork.org/2009/03/07/international-womens-day-2009-afghanistan-observes-international-womens-day/>

### Bangladesh

An end to violence against women and children became the dominant theme in IWD's celebration across Bangladesh. A huge rally was also organised in the capital Dhaka.

The government is pushing a new National Women's Development Policy (NWDPP), which aims to provide equal opportunities for both women and men especially in the political and economic spheres, including parliamentary seats and property rights for women.

However, the draft does not mention the Bangladesh's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW).

Source: IRIN. (17 March 2009). "Bangladesh: Government moves to boost women's rights." URL: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77543>



### Cambodia

Trade unions reiterated their concerns on the impact of the economic crisis particularly on women workers. In January 2009, scores of women factory workers protested the slash on their already meagre wages and their termination. The last several months saw more than 20,000 job losses.

Some women have been forced to work in otherwise precarious environments, in karaoke parlours and night clubs. The Free Trade Union of Cambodia remarked, "Jobless women will not be happy to participate in the discussions about women's rights this year."

Source: Leakhana, Khuon. (10 March 2009). "Women failing to gain rights." URL: <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/index.php/2009031024675/National-news/Women-failing-to-gain-rights.html>

*Read more on page 14*

*Afghan women wore blue scarves and other clothing accessories. The colour resembles that of the burka or the dress which Afghan women wore during the Taliban regime. Photo taken from Feminist Peace Network.*

We! is the newsletter of Isis International, an international NGO servicing women's information and communication needs within and beyond Asia and the Pacific region. We! provides the latest information on the issues, campaigns, conferences, training opportunities, funding possibilities and other goings-on in the women's movement. It also provides updates on national, regional and international events organised by NGOs, government bodies and multilateral agencies that impact women.

We! comes out in both electronic and print editions. The electronic edition is circulated every two weeks, and the print version as special editions. In consideration of the limitations of print space and time-bound nature of some of the materials, not all articles and postings in the electronic version will be included in the monthly version. Isis International encourages feedback and looks forward to receiving information about your activities, issues and campaigns. Archives of we! may be viewed at the Website:

<<http://www.isisinternational.org>> Send communications to [communications@isiswomen.org](mailto:communications@isiswomen.org)