



Human Rights Think Tank Watch

Volume 1 - Issue 3

March 10, 2008

International Women's Day Edition



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Editor's Note

We hope you enjoy the first of our themed editions of the Human Rights Think Tank Watch. We are showcasing publications and information focused on gender rights to commemorate International Women's Day (March 8).

Later this month we will present an issue dedicated to Health and Human Rights, with issues dedicate to Fragile States, Migration, Children's Rights and Shelter to follow in the coming months.

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Introduction

Saturday, March 8 marked the 97th anniversary of International Women's Day. As described by [InternationalWomensDay.org](#), March 8 is a day that governments and people around the world hold "large-scale events that honour women's advancement and while diligently reminding of the continued vigilance and action required to ensure that women's equality is gained and maintained in all aspects of life."

It was in this spirit that in 1995, 189 countries came together in Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women and developed the Beijing Platform for Action. Committing the signatories to eliminating discrimination against women, eradicating poverty and adopting measures towards placing a decisive number of women in key positions, the Beijing Platform became the standard by which we now measure our progress. The Platform committed to ending gender discrimination by the end of the century (i.e. the year 2000). And though this did not happen, this does not mean that the effort should be abandoned.

There remains much work to be done. In her [statement marking IWD](#), Louise Arbour, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, underscored this reality. It is those countries that have not carried through with their commitments to women's rights where much more work is necessary, she said. "It is shameful that, in the 60th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, fundamental rights are still not enjoyed by many women around the world."

Madame Arbour was reacting to the conclusions presented in one of this issue's featured publications, a research paper prepared for the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled *Laws that Discriminate Against Women*. What this paper illustrates is that even when countries commit to the idea of gender equality, it is the responsibility of the international community to ensure that these commitments are followed through.

This edition of the Human Rights Watch is in honour of International Women's Day and this on-going effort to ensure that governments fulfill their commitments to gender equality.

Presented below are a collection of publications drawn from organizations around the world and focused on many different issues related to gender rights. From migration to technology, education to leadership, we have sought to present the many faces of the fight for gender rights.

This issue is a further reminder that women's rights are human rights and that both are inextricably linked to the successful development of societies and countries around the world.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who you think would be interested. If you have any feedback about this issue, please send an e-mail to subscriptions@hri.ca.

HRI Team

Featured Publications

Indicators on Violence Against Women and State Response

Authors: Yakin Erturk, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

Date: January 2008

Brief Description

This is the second report from the current Rapporteur, Yakin Erturk. In this report, following a brief description of his activities for the year, the author proposes the creation of a "limited set of indicators that allows for comparisons between countries" on the issue of violence against women which are "guided by human rights standards, including those contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women."

The author includes a comprehensive description of how such a set of indicators would be constructed and even attaches as an appendix the results of a UN members' survey on this issue.

[View Source](#) [ohchr.org] [Word Document]

Laws that Discriminate Against Women

Author: Fareda Banda

Organization: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Date: March 2008

Brief Description

The principle of non-discrimination is often not respected, frequently in the area of women's rights. The clearest manifestation of this is in the continued existence of laws that directly discriminate against women, despite clear international legal obligations requiring States to abolish, amend or repeal laws that discriminate against women on the basis of sex. This is compounded by lack of implementation of laws which promote women's equality and the absence of institutional mechanisms to promote the human rights of women.

The above passage presents the key message of this substantive review: no matter what laws have been passed or treaties ratified, the reality in many countries is that women still face discrimination based on gender. This conclusion is what gave inspiration to the High Commissioner, Louise Arbour, in her International Women's Day Statement upbraiding those lagging countries.

The report itself is a lengthy review of several states' discriminatory laws against women, which was conducted using specific criteria established in a survey. The author concludes by recommending the commissioning of a UN Special Rapporteur on Laws that Discriminate Against Women to raise awareness on this issue and drive the agenda with those countries that have demonstrated that they have not fulfilled their commitments.

[View Source](#) [ohchr.org] [PDF]

Publications

A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration - *State of World Population Report*

Organization: *United Nations Population Fund*

Date: 2006

From the Authors

Today, half of all international migrants -- 95 million -- are women and girls. Yet, despite substantial contributions to both their families at home and communities abroad, the needs of migrant women continue to be overlooked and ignored. The *State of World Population 2006* report, *A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration*, examines the scope and breadth of female migration, the impact of the funds they send home to support families and communities, and their disproportionate vulnerability to trafficking, exploitation and abuse. The report reveals that although migrant women contribute billions of dollars in cash and services, policymakers continue to disregard both their contributions and their vulnerability—even though female migrants tend to send a much higher proportion of their lower earnings back home than their male counterparts.

[View Source](#) [UNFPA.org] [PDF]

[More UNFPA publications on Gender Equality](#)

A Rights-Based Approach To Development

Organization: *Association for Women's Rights in Development*

Date: August 2002

From the Authors

A rights-based approach to development builds on the experiences and expertise of two significant branches of the women's movement: development and human rights. This [paper] describes the approach, presents its benefits to the development community, and suggests some ways that it can be used.

[View Source](#) [awid.org] [PDF]

African Women are Ready to Lead

Author: Gumisai Mutume

Organization: *Africa Renewal*

Date: July 2006

Brief Description

This article from the July 2006 edition of *Africa Renewal* is an analysis of the progress women have made in achieving leadership roles in many African countries. And though there has been

progress, exemplified by the election of Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson in Liberia, the article clearly demonstrates that there is much more work to be done. As the title of the article would suggest, the author writes that women are still not reaching their full leadership potential. And though Africa is her focus, the author demonstrates in the report that this challenge is in fact global.

[View Source](#) [UN.org]

Documenting Women's Rights Violations by Non-state Actors

Author: Jan Bauer & Anissa Helie

Organization: *Rights & Democracy and Women Living Under Muslim Laws*

Date: 2006

From the Authors

Rights & Democracy (R&D) and Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) produced this manual because there was a need for both human rights groups and women's human rights organizations to better understand the scope of the issue of human rights violations at the hands of non-state actors. In the manual, the nature of violations perpetrated by non-state actors is examined with a particular focus on how activists should document and campaign to address violence committed against women by the groups.

Although women everywhere are subject to this type of human rights violation, the global scope of the issue is better understood through examples drawn from activists' experiences within various Muslim contexts. The immediate goal is to provide activists anywhere in the world with additional tools to struggle against impunity.

[View Source](#) [dd-ra.ca] [PDF]

Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World

Organization: *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*

Date: February 2005

From the Authors

Based on the findings of UNRISD ongoing gender research and over 60 specially commissioned studies, the report's analysis is centred on the economic and political reforms of the 1990s. If most of these reforms did not directly address gender equality, they nevertheless received considerable scrutiny from a gender perspective. And whatever their intentions, they had significant and mixed implications for gender relations and women's well-being.

As its title alludes, achieving gender equality and gender justice will be very difficult in a world that is increasingly unequal. The report presents strong arguments for why gender equality must be placed at the core of efforts to reorient the development agenda. Indeed, if some of the key contemporary challenges (economic growth and structural transformation, equality and social protection, and democratization) are to be met, this is essential.

[View Source](#) [unrisd.org]

*This report is publicly available, but requires readers to register before downloading

Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda

Authors: Ruth Levine, Cynthia Lloyd, Margaret Greene & Caren Grown

Organization: *Center for Global Development*

Date: January 2008

From the Authors

This report describes why and how to initiate effective investments that will give adolescent girls in developing countries a full and equal chance for rewarding lives and livelihoods.

This report's broad agenda includes three key actions:

- *Count girls.* Disaggregate data of all types: from health and education statistics to the counts of program beneficiaries by age and sex.
- *Invest in girls.* Make strategic and significant investments in programs focused on adolescent girls, commensurate with their importance as contributors to the achievement of economic and social goals.
- *Give girls a fair share.* In employment, social programs, protection of human rights, and all other domains ensure that adolescent girls benefit equitably.

The authors have provided specific recommendations for civil society, governments, private-sector leaders, and donor agencies to create mechanisms for the meaningful participation of young women and adolescent girls in their programs and policy, helping to foster youth leadership and gender-sensitive ideology.

[View Source](#) [cgdev.org]

Ripple Effects or Deliberate Intentions?: Assessing Linkages Between Women's Empowerment and Childhood Poverty

Authors: Nicola Jones, Madhuri Mukherjee & S. Galab

Organization: *The Young Lives Project*

Date: May 2007

From the Authors

This paper assesses the inter-generational impacts of women's participation in micro-credit programmes and the transmission mechanisms through which children's wellbeing is affected by different dimensions of women's empowerment. The over-arching question is to what extent are these linkages due to ripple effects and to what extent the result of deliberate policy intentions to tackle childhood poverty.

[View Source](#) [younglives.org.uk] [PDF]

Swept Under the Rug: Abuses against Domestic Workers Around the World

Organization: *Human Rights Watch*

Date: July 2006

Brief Description

The product of five years of interviews and research, this extensive report offers a glimpse into the world of female domestic workers around the world. And as the report concludes, the results of this research are not positive:

"Millions of women and girls around the world turn to domestic work as one of the few options available to them in order to provide for themselves and their families. Instead of guaranteeing their ability to work with dignity and free of violence, governments have systematically denied them key labor protections extended to other workers. Domestic workers, often making extraordinary sacrifices to support their families, are among the most exploited and abused workers in the world."

In an attempt to raise awareness of this on-going problem, the report offers a number of recommendations to specific government ministries in both destination and home countries, and urges better treatment of domestic workers and their families.

[View Source](#) [hrw.org]

*This report also mentions a meeting of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development taking place in September 2006. [Read more on the UN site.](#)

Why New Technology is a Women's Rights Issue

Organization: *Association for Women's Rights in Development*

Date: May 2004

From the Authors

New technologies impact women's lives all over the world. This is transforming our work for gender equality and presenting new challenges to women's rights and sustainable development. This [paper] will explore the complex ways new technologies affect women's rights and their place in a global agenda for gender justice.

[View Source](#) [awid.org] [PDF]

Journal References

Universal Human Rights and Non-Western Normative Systems: A Comparative Analysis of Violence Against Women in Mexico and Pakistan

Author: Silvie Bovarnick

Journal: *Review of International Studies*

Date: January 2007

From the Author

How universally useful are human rights in addressing violence against women? This article addresses this question by looking at the link between gender, ethnicity and human rights to uncover the complexities that underpin current debates about universal justice and multiculturalism. While my discussion of rape in Mexico and Pakistan illustrates significant particularities with respect to how violence against women is constituted in these different cultural contexts, it also shows that culturally specific manifestations of violence against women often share striking similarities in the way that they are allowed to persist, justified and made invisible. As such, they are part of a global mechanism that reproduces gender subordination in a predominantly patriarchal world.

[View Source](#) [journals.cambridge.org] [Abstract - Full text via Cambridge Journals]

Women's Rights Under International Human Rights Treaties: Issues of Rape, Domestic Slavery, Abortion, and Domestic Violence

Author: Beate Rudolf & Andrea Eriksson, Free University of Berlin

Journal: *International Journal of Constitutional Law*

Date: March 2007

From the Authors

Most contemporary constitutions prohibit discrimination based on gender. Yet, as feminist legal scholars have shown, even a constitutional principle of nondiscrimination is not sufficient by itself to ensure women's de facto equality.¹ These scholars advocate applying a gendered perspective to constitutional law so as to adapt it to the specific situation of women.² In recent years, universal and regional human rights bodies have begun to employ this approach in connection with human rights treaties, interpreting them in light of the special threats posed to women's human rights. Such interpretations lend themselves to transposition into national constitutional law (in some if not all cases) and, in legal systems that have formally incorporated public international law, such transpositions may even be obligatory.

[View Source](#) [icon.oxfordjournals.org] [Abstract - Full text via Oxford Journals]

Book References

Mainstreaming Gender in Social Protection for the Informal Economy

Author: Naila Kabeer, Institute for Development Studies

Publisher: *Commonwealth Secretariat*

Date: 2008

From the Authors

In *Mainstreaming Gender in Social Protection for the Informal Economy* Naila Kabeer explores the gendered dimensions of risk, vulnerability and insecurity and hence the need for a gender perspective in the design of social protection measures. Her emphasis is on the informal economy because that is where the majority of women, and indeed the poor, are to be found while also being where official efforts for social protection are most limited.

[View Source](#) [thecommonwealth.org] [Available for Purchase from the Commonwealth Secretariat]

Toward a Compassionate Society

Editor: Mahnaz Afkhami

Organization: *Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development and Peace*

Date: 2002

From the Authors

Toward a Compassionate Society is an anthology focusing on women's roles in conflict resolution, peace building, and democracy in a culturally and politically diverse world. It addresses the importance of cultural pluralism and women's role in promoting peace in the rapidly globalizing world of the 21st century. The issues are examined from a variety of gender-focused cultural and inter-disciplinary perspectives including sociology, anthropology, human rights, philosophy, and religion.

[View Source](#) [learningpartnership.org] [PDF]

Multimedia & Tools

WikiGender - An Initiative from the OECD

Launched: March 8, 2008

Brief Description

Wikigender is your online platform to find and exchange information related to gender equality. The website is work in progress and benefits from your active participation. Users are invited to comment on or improve existing articles, and to create or upload new documents. By providing a platform to share experiences and to learn from each other's knowledge, Wikigender will contribute to a better understanding on the situation of men and women around the world.

[View Source](#) [wikigender.org]

Sources: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Association for Women's Rights in Development, Human Rights Watch, United Nations Population Fund, Center for Global Development, Rights & Democracy and Women Living Under Muslim Laws, The Young Lives Project, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Africa Renewal, International Journal of Constitutional Law, Review of International Studies, Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development and Peace, Informal Economy, The OECD.

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