

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

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

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER January 2012, no. 1**



**Equal Rights**

*Dear members,*

*In this first 2012 Newsletter we go to the Middle East, to Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Jordan, with CEDAW and using quotas. Which strategy, when to use CEDAW, when to use quotas?*

*An article on Women in Leadership, from Egyptian Queen Ku-baba in 3000 BC to women Prime Ministers in 2012, fired our imagination. And at the base of the women's movement is a four-million-strong all-woman network that is rewriting the social and economic history of Kerala, India. From bottom to top!*

*The security of displaced women still fails and could be improved by some simple precautions. Also, women keep striving for a prosperous, secure and sustainable future for both people and the planet when discussing and amending the Rio+20 Zero Draft Outcome Document in New York on 25-27 January 2012.*

*Data on conferences, events and reports are as usual to be found at the end of the IAW Newsletter.*

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN**

Dear members of the IAW Board,

This is just to announce that the International Meeting 2012 will take place in Melbourne from October 8 – October 12 2012. Our hostesses are: Women's Electoral Lobby Australia, the League of Women Voters Victoria and the Union of Australian Women Victoria.

Planning is in progress, and I find it extremely important that we - as members of the Board – already at this stage contact the presidents of our organizations and inform them of the meeting and the importance of their attendance, so that we can get many of them to come. I think the personal contact can make a difference.

I am preparing the first official invitation to our member organizations and will send it out shortly.

According to our constitution the purpose of the International Meeting is for the Board and the presidents to inform each other of the work that is going on and to prepare for Congress in 2013.

As part of the International Meeting our hostesses will organize seminars and workshops.

Much more information will follow as we go along.

Also – if you have suggestions for items on the agenda of the Board, let me know.

*Lene Pind, IAW Secretary-General*

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

The agenda, the members of the Bureau and of the two panels on February 27 and 28 etc. etc. are to be found on <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/56sess.htm>

Please be so kind to inform IAW secretary-general Lene Pind if you are attending CSW 56.

**Priority theme:**

The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges

**Review theme:**

Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women ([agreed conclusions](#) from the fifty-second session)

**Emerging issue:**

Engaging young women and men, girls and boys, to advance gender equality

## **Are Quotas for Women in Politics a Good Idea?** by Isobel Coleman\*

January 2012 - Quotas for women seem to be the hot thing in the Middle East these days. **Libya** just announced a 10 percent quota for women in its new election law. **Tunisia** used a form of quotas to enhance women's participation in its recent election. Iraq has used quotas in parliament and just expanded the use of quotas for women to the civil service; **Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan** have also used quotas.

Over the past week, I've received several queries from blog readers about quotas: Which countries use them? How do they work? Are they democratic? Are they even effective? These are all big questions, and to answer them thoroughly is beyond the scope of this blog post, so here is just a snapshot.

### **Iraq**

Iraq has a quota reserving 25 percent of parliamentary seats for women. Of the 86 current female parliamentarians, only 5 won enough votes in 2010 to be elected without the quota. Many of the women on party lists were relatives of politicians or from prominent families, who ran simply to [allow](#) the party to fulfil the legal requirement for female representation. Women's impact on policy and effective governance has been limited.

The number of female ministers has in fact declined in the last ten years, largely due to the delicate power-sharing arrangements that political parties have reached that [divvy up ministerial spots to party leaders](#) (who are men).

As I wrote in my book [Paradise Beneath Her Feet: How Women are Transforming the Middle East](#): Iraqi female members of parliament have been regularly insulted by their male colleagues and relegated to working on "women's issues." Still, they are in the political mix, and a few have become political role models for a younger generation of aspiring female politicians coming up through the ranks.

The government seems happy enough with the quotas that they've extended them to new hires in the public sector. [A new quota](#) mandates that women make up 50 percent of new hires in the Health and Education ministries and 30 percent in all other ministries. While this could help ease high levels of unemployment for women, it will also compound the trend in Gulf countries where women are disproportionately employed in the public sector.

### **Tunisia**

Tunisia also implemented a quota for women's participation in their parliamentary elections at the end of October.

Following a closed-list proportional representation system, parties were [required](#) to have equal numbers of men and women on their list, alternating candidates by gender.

This is known as a "zippered" list, and effectively guarantees that women will win seats, though the quota does not define a percentage of seats allocated for women.

Overall, women won 23 percent of seats in parliament. (Forty-two of the 49 women elected are from the Islamic Al Nahda party, which won the lion's share of the votes.)

### **Egypt**

A less effective version of this quota system has been implemented in the on-going Egyptian parliamentary elections. Parties were required to include one woman on their list, though they were not required to place the female candidate in a winning position.

The results speak for themselves with fewer than 10 women elected to the 498 member parliament as the third and final round of elections wind down. (So far, I've confirmed three women elected from the Freedom and Justice Party, one from Al Wafd, and another from the Egyptian Social Democratic Party.)

### **Quotas are not a solution for every country**

My bottom line on quotas is that they are not a solution for every country, nor are they guaranteed to increase women's meaningful and effective participation in governance.

Quotas bring women's voices into political systems where they are otherwise excluded, short-cutting a process that can naturally take generations.

They have been used successfully by countries ranging from Norway to Rwanda to India.

Other factors - like strong political will, enabling women's freedom of movement, and [networks of support for female candidates](#) - significantly strengthen the effectiveness of quotas.

### **Drude Dahlerup**

For those interested in learning more about the use and effectiveness of quotas in politics, I recommend the [work of Drude Dahlerup](#). Below are Drude's pros and cons on quotas.

**Pros** Quotas for women do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.

- ^ Quotas imply that there are several women together in a committee or assembly, thus minimizing the stress often experienced by the token women.
- ^ Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.
- ^ Women's experiences are needed in political life.
- ^ Election is about representation, not educational qualifications.
- ^ Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male-dominated political system.
- ^ It is in fact the political parties that control the nominations, not primarily the voters who decide who gets elected.
- ^ Introducing quotas may cause conflicts, but only temporarily.

**Cons** Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference.

- ^ Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
- ^ Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications and that more qualified candidates are pushed aside.
- ^ Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.
- ^ Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the party organization.

More on: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/01/are-quotas-for-women-in-politics-a-good-idea/251237/#>

Mailed to us by IAW member Arina Angerman

*\*Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, focussing on the Middle East and South Asia; Director of CFR's Civil Society, Markets and Democracy Initiative; Director of the Council's Women and Foreign Policy Program. Her areas of expertise include democratization, civil society and economic development, regional gender issues, educational reform, and microfinance.*

## **Women in Leadership from Egyptian Queen Ku-baba 3000 BC to women Prime Ministers in 2012**

This site - <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/> - is dedicated to the women who have ruled since the beginning of times - or as long as the sources date back.

There have always been [female rulers](#). Egyptian Queens are believed to have governed from around 3000 BCE, and the first to be named by the sources without any doubt is Ku-baba, who ruled the Mesopotamian City-State of Ur round 2500 BCE.

### **First female ministers**

However, it was not until during and just after World War I that the first few women became members of the revolutionary governments in Ukraine, Russia, Hungary and Ireland. Nina Bang, Danish Minister of Education 1924-26, was the first woman to be minister in democratically elected parliamentary government.

Nevertheless, development was slow and it was not until the end of the 20th century that female ministers stopped being unusual, though a number of countries don't have women in their governments at the moment.

See also: <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/First-female-ministers.htm>

Or current female leaders on: <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Current-Women-Leaders.htm>

IAW has a number of members with history degrees and on Ning an IAW group is working on the History of IAW. Check out this interesting site: <http://iawomen.ning.com/group/historyofiaw>

## **CEDAW IN THE ARAB REGION**

An interesting website - Women's Learning Partnership - well worth looking at .

We have copied here their page on CEDAW. On [www.learningpartnership.org](http://www.learningpartnership.org)

### **Eliminating Discrimination against Women in the Arab Region**

The majority of Arab countries have ratified, though belatedly, the [Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), with the exceptions of Sudan, Qatar and Somalia.

However, ratifying CEDAW does not have a concrete impact on the status and situation of women in the region for two main reasons:

1. [States in the region have entered reservations to core provisions of the Convention](#), in particular articles 2,9,15 and 16; and

2. Ratification has not generally been accompanied by the necessary strategies and measures to bring public policies and national legislation into conformity with the spirit and the provisions of CEDAW, including those in respect of which no reservation has been entered.

In this context, human rights organisations and women's rights organisations from throughout the region united in Morocco in June 2006 to launch the **Rabat Appeal for the regional campaign Equality Without Reservation.**

Today, this campaign continues and is gaining force both at the international and regional levels to demand from governments in the region to take immediate action for:

- ⤴ The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the withdrawal of all reservations;
- ⤴ The implementation of the CEDAW Convention and the harmonisation of national legislation with its provisions on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;
- ⤴ The ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, as an essential instrument to ensure its implementation and to reinforce the fight against violence against women and violations of women's rights, individual and collective, in Arab Countries.

On: <http://www.learningpartnership.org/cedaw>

*IAW coordination: IAW secretary-general Lene Pind*

## AROUND THE WORLD

### **Rio+20 Zero Draft Outcome Document released**

The [zero draft outcome document](#) – the official document to be negotiated by United Nations Member States in the lead up to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) – has been released. Although the text will be extensively negotiated in the coming months and will most likely be modified, the zero draft in its current stage reaffirms Member States' commitment to work together for a prosperous, secure and sustainable future for both people and the planet.

#### **First set of discussions on 25-27 January**

The first set of discussions on the zero draft outcome document are planned for 25-27 January 2012 at UN Headquarters in New York. These discussions will include both a general discussion on the whole document, as well as informal-informal negotiations on the first two sections of the document.

#### **Regular Session NGOs**

The Regular Session of the Committee on NGOs will be held from 30 January to 8 February 2012 at UN Headquarters in New York.

The session is expected to consider 190 new NGO applications for ECOSOC consultative status as well as 153 NGO applications that were deferred during previous sessions. Moreover, it will review 375 quadrennial NGO reports.

It is expected that the Committee will adopt a report on the session on 17 February, after which it will be sent to the Economic and Social Council for approval in July 2012.

On: <http://www.unctsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=12&nr=238&menu=32>

### **Security of Displaced Women fails**

Bangkok – Aid agencies and donors are failing to take into account the relief and security needs of women displaced by disasters and conflicts, according to Elisabeth Rasmusson, Secretary-General of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in an interview.

#### **43 million displaced people**

There are more than 43 million people displaced by conflict, three quarters of them estimated to be women and children, according to NRC. Some have fled to another part of their own country and others have crossed borders.

"Women are exposed to assault and injustice in all kinds of environments, and by anyone from a military soldier to family members," Rasmusson said. "And often perpetrators go free, so there is little risk in abusing, raping, kidnapping or killing women."

A binding Security Council resolution, passed 10 years ago, calls for women and girls in conflicts to be protected from rape, but only around 20 countries have implemented it. A recent UN report said sexual violence is an increasingly common weapon of war.

### **Simple measures can give more safety for women**

Simple measures such as making sure camps for the displaced are well-lit, building toilets within compounds, and letting civilians – instead of armed troops – run the camps can help provide safety for women, Rasmusson said.

### **Lack of funding for protection**

Donor indifference also means funding for activities to protect women from violence and discrimination has been decreasing.

With Pakistan's flood response, for example, only 13 percent of the money needed to protect women has been provided, and in Zimbabwe, only 10 percent of this work is funded.

"Few donors are willing to fund protection activities because they're not visible. The food, the shelter, the water, the health – all visible, tangible, concrete," Rasmusson said.

### **Militarisation of protection**

One factor hampering displaced women's security is the increased militarisation of protection, which is seen as the job of armed personnel even though it encompasses physical and mental safety as well as human rights, Rasmusson said.

"What kind of signal is that sending when you have people who are supposed to protect you supporting those who are violating your rights?" she asked.

She cited Democratic Republic of Congo as an example, saying UN peacekeepers there have a "contradictory mandate". Although protecting civilians is part of their mission, they were involved in military operations last year with the Congolese army "which is one of the main perpetrators" of sexual violence against women, the top refugee official said.

Rasmusson urged peace negotiators to make more effort to seek and incorporate displaced women's voices and needs into peace agreements and other post-conflict processes. More on:

<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/interview-displaced-womens-aid-security-needs-overlooked/>

### **India - Goddesses of small things**

By T.V. Jayan on a unique scheme to combat poverty through community action that's winning accolades everywhere: A four-million-strong network of women in Kerala has empowered its members by giving them a livelihood.

Jessy Job likes to watch her bitter gourd plants ripen. After all, the vegetable with its wrinkled and coarse skin, is her lifeline. Job, who contemplated suicide when her marriage broke up, is understandably proud of her farming skills. A single crop earlier this year earned her a profit of Rs 2 lakh.

About 15km from her village of Mulayam in Kerala's Thrissur district, Sowmya Biju is honing her newly acquired skills in animal husbandry. Milk from cows that she rears at home is in demand among Thrissur's city dwellers. The money she earns has helped her repay a bank loan and build a brick-and-mortar house in place of the thatched-roof hut her four-member family used to live in.

Jessy and Sowmya are part of a four-million-strong all-woman network that is rewriting the social and economic history of Kerala. Some 2.05 lakh women's groups have come together in a programme called Kudumbashree (or family prosperity) initiated by the state government in 1998 to tackle poverty.

Last year, the central government adopted Kudumbashree as a model for its National Rural Livelihood Mission.

The groups' farming collectives have brought nearly 10 per cent of fallow land in the state under cultivation. Local markets are flooded with garments stitched by members of grassroots units. A wide range of products — from ready-to-eat *biryani* and coconut oil to jam and spices — made by micro enterprises have a ready market.

### **Political gains as well**

Economic success leads to political gains as well. In the 2010 local body elections, when 50 per cent of seats was reserved for women for the first time, 11,600 Kudumbashree women contested the polls under different banners.

About 6,000 women — representing 60 per cent of the reserved seats — won. The sole woman minister in the present government, P.K. Jayalakshmi, was a Kudumbashree member. Kerala is the only state in the country that allows the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to prepare land for cultivation. As a result, women farmers get wages of Rs 150 a day working on their own farms under the scheme. “No one knows if they will still find it profitable if the benefit is withdrawn,” she says.

#### **Claim of male farmers?**

Moreover, male farmers could also claim the same benefit under MGNREGS. “If they do, the availability of land on lease for women’s groups will come down drastically,” she points out. Agarwal believes that women’s groups will find it extremely difficult to negotiate land leases on viable terms for sufficient periods.

But these issues don’t trouble the women right now. This is the time for celebration. A woman’s hard work is translating into money. Kudumbashree units in Job’s Nadathara panchayat alone sold vegetables worth Rs 78 lakh during this year’s Onam festival.

Aviyal, the traditional Kerala dish of mixed vegetables that’s at the centre of an Onam feast, never tasted this good.

Read more on: [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1120108/jsp/7days/story\\_14977194.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1120108/jsp/7days/story_14977194.jsp)

Mailed to us by IAW member Anjana Basu

### **EVENTS - REPORTS - CONFERENCES**

[Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, eightieth session](#)

13 February - 9 March, Geneva, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/cerds80.htm>

The **Millennium Development Goals** report 2011 is to be found on:

[http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/\(2011\\_E\)%20MDG%20Report%202011\\_Book%20LR.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/(2011_E)%20MDG%20Report%202011_Book%20LR.pdf)

[Commission for Social Development, fiftieth session](#), 1 - 10 February, New York, on:

<http://social.un.org/index/CommissionforSocialDevelopment/Sessions/2012.aspx>

International Action Network on Small Arms - IANSA - **Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence** on 11-17 June 2012. On: [www.iansa-women.org](http://www.iansa-women.org)

World Health Organisation: **European Action Plan for HIV/AIDS 2012–2015**

HIV cases continue to rise in the Eastern part of Europe. WHO has an Action Plan on:

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/communicable-diseases/hiv/aids/publications/2011/european-action-plan-for-hiv/aids-20122015>

The eighth session of the **Human Rights Council** Advisory Committee will take place from 20-24 February 2012 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. Reports are to be found on:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/19session/reports.htm>

2012 is the European Year for **Active Ageing and Solidarity** between Generations, and the themes of the Year will be visible also in the work of the European Women’s Lobby (EWL). This year, the EWL will look at intergenerational solidarity from a feminist perspective and apply a life-cycle perspective to its work on various gender equality issues.

#### **Note**

We are sending this Newsletter as an attachment, saved in Word 97. Please be so kind to advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, so we can mail them this Newsletter too.

IAW Newsletter / News Flash : Joke Sebus <[iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net](mailto:iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net)>

International Women’s News : Priscilla Todd (English) <[iaw.iwnews@womenalliance.org](mailto:iaw.iwnews@womenalliance.org)>  
: Mathilde Duval (French) <[mathilde.duval@yahoo.fr](mailto:mathilde.duval@yahoo.fr)>

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