



# Women's

## Federation for World Peace International

United Nations Office Newsletter

Spring 2007

### Transforming Value Systems to Eliminate Violence and Discrimination Against and Enhance the Status of the Girl Child

#### WFWPI Parallel Event at the 51st CSW

February 27, 2007 - UN HQ, New York



By *Bonnie Berry*

The priority theme of the 51<sup>st</sup> Commission on the Status of Women was The Elimination of Violence and Discrimination against the Girl Child. This important subject was the basis for WFWPI's parallel event topic, which explored the importance of transforming value systems that justify discrimination and violence against girls and women. Thank you to cosponsors, Religious Youth Service and Bridgeport International Academy. Three educators with unique approaches to the topic were the panelists. The meeting room was filled with a racially and culturally diverse audience of about seventy attendees, as moderator Bonnie Berry began the meeting.

**Mrs. Motoko Sugiyama**, WFWPI Vice President and Chief of the WFWPI UN Office opened the panel with welcoming remarks. She stressed the perspective and WFWP belief that men and women are created with equal value to be co-creators. Just as men and women contribute different elements in the process of creating a child, they also have differing roles and responsibilities in creating a peaceful



world. Most importantly, men and women need to see each other as partners in the process.

The first panelist was **Dr. Keisuke Noda**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, NY. Dr. Noda set the stage for the rest of the presentation by speaking passionately from his heart about the problem of people misunderstanding the value of others. He stressed that our value comes in relation to one another and through sharing love with each other, dwelling in the hearts of each other. Unfortunately, he explained that those who practice discrimination and violence against others are viewing those others as objects, as commodities or machines to be used or even bought and sold. Dr. Noda referred to the comment made by Japan's Minister of Health and Welfare, Mr. Yanagisawa on January 27, 2007. Mr. Yanagisawa called women "child bearing machines". According to Dr. Noda, this reference demonstrates an attitude that does not reflect appreciation for the humanity of



WFWP Event, *continued on pg. 11*

#### Contents

WFWP Event at 51st CSW	1
Ending Impunity for Violence Against Women and Girls	1
<b>At the UN in New York</b>	
NGO Briefings	2
Reports from Special Events	
Launch of 2007 Education for All	3
Breaking the Cycle of Poverty	3
Our Common Humanity	4
<b>At the UN in Geneva</b>	
World Peace Day Panel	5
Strengthening Preventive Measures within the Human Rights System	5
<b>At the UN in Bangkok</b>	
Report	6
51st CSW Report	7
<b>Activities Around the World</b>	
Africa	8
Latin America	9
Asia	10
<b>WFWPI Signed Joint NGO Statements</b>	12
Upcoming Events	12

### Ending Impunity for Violence against Women and Girls

In Commemoration of International Women's Day  
March 8, 2007, UN HQ, New York  
Conference Room 2, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm.

By *Motoko Sugiyama*

This special event commemorated International Women's Day, March 8 and was the highlight of the 51<sup>st</sup> Session of CSW.

Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Undersecretary General for Public Information was moderator. He announced this was his last moderating role as Under Secretary General as he is leaving the post.

Speakers for the opening session were **Secretary General H.E. Ban Ki-Moon, H.E. Sheikhha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of the General Assembly and H.E. Dumisan Shadrak Kumalo, President of the Security Council** this month.

The panel discussion had six diverse panelists:

- Ms. Carla Del Ponte, Prosecutor, International Tribunal for former Yugoslavia

*Women's Day, continued on pg. 6*



## Statement of Purpose

The Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) supports a network of National WFWPI Chapters worldwide.

WFWPI Chapters adhere to the principle that women, working together, taking initiative and empowering one another across traditional lines of race, culture and religion to create healthy families, are resolving the complex problems of our societies and world.

Ultimately "solutions" come as *true* partnerships between men and women are established in all levels of society. The beginning point is within society's most elemental level—the family.

Peace then expands into our communities, nation and world.

Therefore, WFWPI works to provide women worldwide with:

***the knowledge, tools and support needed to create peace at home, peace in our communities, our nations and our world.***

WFWPI International is a non-profit, non-governmental international organization in General Consultative Status of ECOSOC and DPI Associates with the United Nations

Motoko Sugiyama  
*Publisher & Editor-in-Chief*

Bonnie Berry  
*Editor*

Merly Barete-Barlaan  
*Production & Distribution*

Friederike Buczyk  
*Layout & Design*

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4 West 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10036.

For information, subscriptions, comments or editorial suggestions, please call or fax:  
(914) 946-3017

or write to:  
WFWPI, 4 West 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10036.  
E-mail: WFWPInt1@aol.com

Find us on the Web at  
<http://www.wfwp.org>

## At the UN in New York...

Reports of NGO Briefings

### Human Rights Challenges in the 21st Century

In Observance of Human Rights Day of December 10  
December 7, 2006 - UN HQ, New York

*By Motoko Sugiyama*

Prior to the briefing, the short film, "Punam" was shown. The film was made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights about the life of a poor Nepalese family. "Punam" is the name of a nine-year old girl who took the role of mother and caretaker of two younger siblings to help her father who had lost his wife. In addition to mothering and housekeeping, Punam attends elementary school with her siblings.

Moderator Mr. Juan Carlos Brandt opened the briefing by announcing that the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights will focus on poverty eradication this year.

First speaker, Ms. Belen Spag, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations outlined progress on human rights in Chile following the 1973 coup de 'tat. Chile's citizens are still searching for bodies of people who disappeared during the coup de 'tat, and Chile is focusing on the promotion of human rights. Chile used to be a society steeped in discriminatory practices. But the president of Chile is taking initiative to strengthen democracy. These efforts include: eliminating all kinds of discrimination, protecting human rights and creating an

environment of inclusiveness in education, health care and housing. In conclusion, Ms. Spag said, "sometimes governmental delegates also feel alone. If NGOs are behind us, we feel more confident. We strongly believe the UN needs NGOs".

Mr. Jimmie Briggs, journalist and author of "Innocent Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War", was the second speaker. He emphasized the important role that media can play in promoting human rights. Mr. Briggs has observed child soldiers in his journey through many countries as a journalist. He cited ways of deterring recruitment of children into armed conflict. Child soldiers have participated in raping women and girls because they feel they can do anything they want. Therefore, reintegrating and rehabilitating child soldiers requires education and a long period of counseling.

Mr. Steve Crawshaw, UN Advocacy Director of Human Rights Watch was the last speaker. He illustrated the interconnectedness of all the issues discussed through out the panel, including human rights, women's rights, HIV/AIDS, poverty and so on. All the issues merge. In some African, Asian and South American

*Human Rights, continued on pg. 4*

### Uniting Against Terrorism: Recommendations for a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

February 8, 2007 - UN HQ, New York

*By Motoko Sugiyama*

As the briefing began, a World Chronicle video of an interview with Mr. Javier Ruperez, Executive Director of Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate was shown. In the video, Mr. Ruperez was interviewed by reporters from Al Jazeera and Global Security Newswire.

This briefing focused on and discussed recommendations for action listed in the Report of the Secretary-General, "Uniting Against Terrorism: Recommendations for Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy" which was adopted on September 8, 2006 and launched on September 19, 2006.

Mr. Juan Carlos Brandt, Chief of DPI, NGO Section moderated the Briefing.

Ms. Pernile Dahler Kardel, Counselor, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations was the first speaker. She observed that a few years ago, terrorism was not an issue at the UN. Only after September 11, 2001 the Security Council began to take steps to deal with terrorism. However, it took five long years for the Secretary General's recommendations

on dealing with terrorism and launching of the plan. The Launch of the Counter-Terrorism Strategy means we finally have a Global Platform for fighting terrorism. The three main points to the recommendations are: (1) The Security Council can form a task force for implementation, (2) Because the strategy is very comprehensive, it will be possible for member states to get support and assistance from the task force. (3) Civil society must have a key role in the process because of the sensitive nature of the issue.

The second speaker, Ms. Yvonne Terlinger, UN representative of Amnesty International, stated that Amnesty International stands firmly behind the basic human rights of civilians. Amnesty International speaks out often whenever and wherever basic human rights are violated. Ms. Terlinger gave an overview of Amnesty International methods for addressing human rights issues. She also explained Amnesty International views on the efforts of

*Terrorism, continued on pg. 4*

## Launch of 2007 Education for All: Global Monitoring Report

October 26, 2006 - Labouisse Hall, UNICEF House, UN HQ, NY

By *Motoko Sugiyama*

The International panel on early childhood care and education was sponsored by UNESCO (The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) in collaboration with UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund) to generate stronger commitment to achieve education for all and in particular, early childhood care and education programmes. The panel drew attention to multiple benefits of early childhood education and highlighted best practices.

M.C. Mr. Peter Smith, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO opened the meeting. The first half of the program was the launch of Strong Foundation: Early Childhood Care and Education, EFA (Education for All) Monitoring Report 2007.

Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF gave welcome remarks. Opening remarks were given by Mr. Koichi Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, who thanked Ms. Ann Veneman for her welcome. He stated

that the EFA goals adopted in 2000 by 164 countries cover the whole learning spectrum, from infancy to adulthood. Alongside the EFA goals, the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) cover a broad range of objectives aimed at halving poverty by 2015. The two sets of goals do not represent two separate agendas. They are one. The EFA goals cannot be fulfilled if hunger and poor health prevail.

A message from USA First Lady, Mrs. Laura Bush was read by M.C. Mr. Peter Smith. Mrs. Bush said that as an honorary Ambassador for the UN Literacy Decade, she is happy to offer congratulations on the Launch of the 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report. The report will measure progress toward achieving education for all by 2015. She hosted a Conference on Global Literacy at the White House which featured effective and replicable literacy programs from nine countries to encourage leaders from around the world and to support UNESCO's goal of EFA.

*Education for All, continued on pg. 4*

## Our Common Humanity in the Information Age: Principles and Values for Development

UN Forum: November 29, 2006 - UN HQ, New York

By *Merly Barlaan*

On November 29, 2006, this global forum was held at the UN under the framework of the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development (GAID). Partners were: Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (UNDESA), Foreign Policy Association, Friends of the UN, Global Compact, UNDP, UNFIP, UNESCO, UN Millennium Project, The World Bank, WFUNA, ICCA, Alliance of Civilizations, CORE, UNNGO-IRENE, World Peace Prayer Society, and Institute for a Culture of Peace. Top-level speakers were gathered, including Nobel laureates, leading thinkers and innovators. These speakers engaged in a series of interactive roundtable discussions based on values affirmed in the Millennium Declaration. The focus was on the values that unite our common humanity and how these values can be expressed globally through achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, expedited by rapidly developing information and communication technologies.

The Plenary Session was held in Conference Room 4 at UN HQ. Welcome remarks were delivered by *Mr. Sarbuland Khan, Executive Coordinator, Global Alliance for ICT and Development* followed by introductory remarks by the Chair *Mr. Shashi Tharoor, UN Under-*

*Secretary-General, Department of Public Information.*

*H.E. Ms. Shaikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of the General Assembly addressed the participants warmly. She emphasized the need for strong partnerships between the UN and all stakeholders: civil society, private sector and government. She stated that if we remain committed, we can achieve the MDGs by 2015. The United Nations alone cannot address the issues. This is the time for commitment and delivering on promises. She concluded her address by saying "Let us send a strong and unified message to the world that the global community is one family with shared values".*

*Keynote speakers were: H.E. Mr. Ali Hachani, President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, Former President of Finland, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Ms. Julia Ormond, Actress, Ms. Katherine Sierra, Vice-President, World Bank, and Ms. Louise T. Blouin Mac Bain, President, Louise T. Blouin Foundation.*

*H.E. Mr. Ali Hachani stated that the agenda of ECOSOC connects social development and poverty. Our efforts should focus on making ICT development a reality for everyone, poor and wealthy. Improving the economic and*

*Common Humanity, continued on pg. 12*

## Breaking the Cycle of Poverty:

Challenges and Opportunities for LDCs

November 16, 2006 - UN HQ, New York

By *Merly Barlaan*

### Background Note:

Almost half the population of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) lives in extreme poverty. Limited human, institutional, technical, trade and productive capacity, inadequate infrastructure, limited capacity to mobilize domestic and attract external resources, unsustainable external debt, high vulnerability to external economic shocks, natural disasters, and prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are major constraints in development. Breaking the vicious cycle of poverty requires beneficial integration of LDCs into the world economy by improving their access to external finance, international markets and information and communication technology. It also requires building productive capacities of LDCs, promoting trade, investment and employment. Tapping latent entrepreneurship, traditional knowledge, hidden or underutilized resources, and strengthening the linkages between dynamically growing sectors with the rest of the economy while providing necessary skills and training are also indispensable for sustainable development of LDCs. Promotion of tourism can often be a positive. General constraints to tourism promotion include political instability, insecurity and corruption. Specific constraints include insufficient awareness among national and international financial authorities about the real potential of tourism, lack of coordination among actors in the tourism development process, lack of coordination between the public and private sector and lack of commitment in the private sector.

### Forum Report:

On November 15-16, 2006, The United Nations and the Office of the Undersecretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) co-sponsored The International Forum on the Eradication of Poverty at UN HQ, New York. On November 16, 2006 from 3:00 -4:20 p.m., a panel of experts spoke before an audience consisting of all major stakeholders in development process: representatives of governments, civil society and NGOs, academia and private sector, bilateral and multilateral donors. The meeting was entitled: *"Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: Challenges and Opportunities for the LDCs"*. The panel addressed the issue of poverty as a multifaceted

*Poverty, continued on pg. 4*

**Education for All, contd from pg. 3**

Mr. Nichols Burnett, Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report team gave a presentation about the report. He explained the six goals of EFA and their interconnections. Forty seven out of one hundred and twenty five countries have achieved EFA goals so far. Mr. Burnett stressed that education is the foundation for life and livelihood. Higher education brings sharp increases in income. The importance of ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) must be emphasized. For complete information, please visit [www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org).

The second half of the program was a High-Level panel on ECCE, Good Practices in Action. Panelists were President Michelle Bachelet, Chile (Video message); Ms. Maxine Henry-Wilson, Minister of Education, Jamaica, Mr. Lothar Krappman, Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Mr. Papa Owusu Ankomah, Minister of Education, Ghana. Ms. Joy Phumaphi, Assistant Director-General, Family and Community Health, WHO (World Health Organization). Ms. Inderjit Khurana, founder and director of the Ruchika Social Service Organization, India.

Panelists shared their respective country's experiences of progress and challenges regarding ECCE.

At the end of the program the comment arose from the floor that none of the panelists addressed the need for peace education as an element of early childhood education. The whole audience agreed that whenever and wherever education is discussed, the importance of peace education should be stressed.



**Poverty, contd from pg. 3**

and multidimensional phenomenon, with a special focus on areas which offer opportunities for creating employment and driving economic growth in LDCs. The meeting opened with panel moderator Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, UN Undersecretary-General of OHRLS citing the background leading to this forum. He emphasized the importance of solving poverty in the least developed countries and expressed appreciation for the sincere efforts of the meeting participants.

The first presenter was H.E. Mr. Joe Robert Pemagbi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations. Ambassador Pemgabi spoke about the challenges of poverty reduction in post-conflict LDCs, specifically, Sierra Leone. He stressed that Sierra Leone failed to convert wealth potential into wealth because of conflict and the inability of the public and private sector to work together productively. A balance between aid to economic infrastructure and production is indicated.

The second presenter was H.E. Mr. Ifektar Ahmed Chowdhury, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations. Ambassador Chowdhury cited Bangladesh's success in alleviating poverty through Micro-credit programs, and mentioned the Brahman model. He said that indigenous knowledge and homegrown ideas, not foreign aid were at the core of Bangladesh's success. Micro-credit management also contributed to success. Creativity and capacity to improve people's situations were instrumental. The key to success was revolutionizing rural attitudes toward women.

Involving women in the field of finance and development has been very successful, creating positive impact on the family and children.

The third presenter was Mr. Charles Gore, Chief of Research and Policy Analysis, Special Programme on LDCs, UNCTAD. Mr. Gore gave a presentation on strategy for doubling the average household income in the LDCs. In order to double the household income in the next 10 years, he emphasized the need to create more employment opportunities. Most of the LDCs face a deepening employment crisis. He said that if current trends continue, poverty will rise from 334 million in year 2000 to 471 million in the year 2015. He suggested that LDCs should design national poverty reduction strategies that focus on the private sector. He also mentioned that almost half the aid that reaches LDCs goes to debt forgiveness and not on investing in human potential such as education or economic development.

Questions from the floor were focused on the international dimension of the poverty trap, which is further tightened by the asymmetric nature of current globalization. The need for private sector participation in creating sustainable development programs was stressed.



**Human Rights, contd from pg. 2**

countries there has been horrific expansion of human rights violations. Twenty to thirty years ago it seemed like there would never be justice. But it is different now. There are human rights violations but there is optimism. Progress is being made. Mr. Crawshaw explained that Human Rights Watch was organized to document human rights violations and meet with government officials at the UN and other governmental bodies around the world to advocate for change in policy and practice.

The UN faces great challenges and the need to reform after 60 years in existence. But it is the only international organization of our time, where all member states, representing all of humankind can meet, discuss, debate and come up with solutions for the betterment of the lives of our human family. Therefore, there is hope and there are ways to realize a peaceful world through unified effort by all those working with and within the UN.



**Terrorism, contd from pg. 2**

the UN to integrate human rights issues with counter terrorism strategy by making resolutions and adoptions in the General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council. She emphasized the need for the establishment of the Counter Terrorism Committee and the International Judiciary Monitoring Committee to enforce integration effectively.

During the Question and Answer period, there was hot debate on the definition of terrorism. Some claimed that terrorists are freedom fighters. The responses to this were: Though it is extremely difficult to define terrorism, there is a difference between actor and act. If an actor takes no action, it is difficult to punish. If the actor targets civilians, it is not acceptable. We should not consider something terrorism based on ideology, but based on social norms. All forms of terrorism should be condemned. It is very important to

implement the GCTS (Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy) because it provides enforcement through monitoring by the counter-terrorism committee.

We appreciate former Secretary General of the UN; Mr. Kofi Annan for his great endeavor of shepherding this recommended Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy until it was finally launched on September 19, 2006, in his final months as Secretary General of the United Nations.



## At the UN in Geneva ...

### World Peace Day Panel

September 21, 2006 - UN Geneva

By Carolyn Handschin

The CONGO CSW Working Group on Peace and the Working Group on Women and Economic Development organized a Panel on "Gender: Peace and Development" to mark the 24<sup>th</sup> World Peace Day, September 21, 2006 at the United Nations Office in Geneva. Speakers included UNESCO Director, Ingeborg Breines in Geneva, who described the achievements of their Culture of Peace Program, and linked it to gender, according to the concept that for women, security as empowerment is preferable to security as protection.



Femmes Africa Solidarite Executive Director, Bineta Diop reported about milestone developments that led up to the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325. She entreated all concerned to remain vigilant until its full compliance, encouraging us to make sure it is put on all national and UN agency agendas. As international NGO's, we have a responsibility to governments and civil society to follow up until success is assured.

Given women's ability to concern themselves with multiple issues simultaneously, they are better suited to address current peace needs, affirmed Charles Graves, Secretary General of Interfaith International. He also stressed the concept of coexistence as religions go beyond tolerance and commit themselves to peace building. Rosemary Smith, the speaker from Brama Kumaris WSU, explained that women have a decisive role in nurturing self-esteem. Also they have the capacity to "invest



in" rather than exploit the future and deserve to be given the opportunity and support to do so. Astrid Stuckelberger, panelist from SGG, spoke of an NGO Committee on the Status of Women project to chart the development of the peace efforts of women worldwide that could statistically convince governments about the breadth and effectiveness of all the unrecognized and undervalued work of women.

An 18 year old activist from Kosovo, Fatmire Feka stirred the participants in her resolve to see that the cycles of war and violence turn in a positive direction. With the ashes still burning following the war in Kosovo, she founded an

World Peace Day, continued on pg. 11

## Strengthening Preventive Measures within the Human Rights System

2006 - UN HQ Geneva, Switzerland

By Carolyn Handschin

The CONGO Working Group on "Human Rights Education and Learning" (WG HREL) of which WFWPI is a member, was established in 2006 "for the purpose of ensuring more effective NGO participation to promote human right education and learning in human rights bodies within the UN". It was concluded that "learning respect for the human rights of all will contribute to shaping better behavior towards a culture of human rights and fostering the understanding and cooperation between diverse societies and cultures" that could fill in a missing preventive aspect in our emergency-minded responses. Below are excerpts from a joint statement made by NGOs of the WG to the Human Rights Council that give an overview of the United Nation's recent efforts to institutionalize Human Rights Education programs as well as proposing a list of recommendations for the Council to consider:

*"The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) aimed to raise global awareness of human rights and promote a universal human rights culture. The Decade was followed by the World Programme for Human Rights Education, of which the Plan of Action was adopted by the General Assembly (A/59/525) and started 1 January 2005 with its first phase (2005-2007) focusing on human rights education in primary and secondary school systems. The World Programme is now an ongoing global process structured in consecutive phases focusing*

*on a specific sector or theme for every phase to follow."*

*In light of the reform of the United Nation mechanism on Human Rights, the issue of human rights education and learning have rightly been put into part of the central concerns of the Council as clearly stated in operative paragraph 5 of General Assembly Resolution 60/251 on the establishment of Human Rights Council according to which the council will: "Promote human rights education and learning as well as advisory services, technical assistance and capacity building, to be provided in consultation with and with the consent of Member States concerned".*

*We, the co-signed NGOs, understand that human rights education and learning are effective tools to tackle the root causes of all human rights violations, and to help continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions.*

*...and (therefore) urge the Council to:*

*1. Include the following as an Item in the list of the Agenda on the substantial issues of the Council: "Human rights education and learning, advisory services, technical assistance and capacity building, as well as public information on human rights"*

*2. Encourage each member state of the United Nations to include human rights education and learning as part of their human rights policy which should be concretized in a programme for*

*implementation in a specific period of time and to require them to indicate it clearly in their voluntary pledge for the candidacy for the Human Rights Council membership.*

*3. Place human rights education and learning as one of the essential elements in the process of the Universal Periodic Review, ensuring that the report of each state clearly (i) mentions their commitment to promotion of human rights education and learning, (ii) includes the progress made in implementation of human rights education and learning at the national level, and (iii) indicates any relevant national policies..."*

As a further contribution to the ongoing World Programme for Human Rights Education, the OHCHR has just released a database on Human Rights Education and Training, aiming to facilitate information sharing on the many resources available on the issue. This database provides information on: 1) "Institutions" that offer training programmes and produce training material, 2) "Programmes", conferences, training courses and 3) "Materials" on human rights training and education; manuals, curricula, reports, etc. This can be found at <http://hre.ohchr.org>.



# At the UN in Bangkok

## Women's Roles as Leaders: Participation in Decision Making, Opportunities & Creating Change

7th WFWP International Leaders Seminar - October 17, 2006 - Bangkok, Thailand

By Delia Javanasundara

Women's Federation for World Peace International organized a one day international seminar titled "Women's Roles as Leaders: Participation in Decision Making, Opportunities and Creating Change", in conjunction with the "International Day for the Eradication of Poverty" commemoration on October 17<sup>th</sup>. The seminar was held in Conference 4 of the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand. There were 250 participants from around the world and Thailand.

UNIFEM Program Manager, Ms. Fareeha Ibrahim, delivered the keynote message of Ms. Jean D'Cunha, Regional Program Director for UNIFEM, Asia and the Pacific. WFWP International president, Dr. Lan Young Moon Park spoke, stressing the importance of having equal numbers of men and women in political and government positions.



Dr. Lan Young Moon Park, International President of WFWP International delivers her Keynote Address.

### Women's Day, contd from pg. 1

- Ms. Dillan Francisca Toro Torres, President of the Senate, Congress of the Republic of Columbia
- Mr. Antero Lopes, Deputy Police Advisor, DPKO (Department of Peacekeeping Operations)
- Ms. Raghida Dergham, Columnist & Senior Diplomatic Correspondent for Al Hayt
- Rev. Jacques A. De Graff, 100 Black Men Mr. Todd Menirson, Executive Director, White Ribbon Campaign

In the opening session, Ms. Angela King, the former Assistant Secretary General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues who passed away recently was honored for the great foundation she established with CSW. Also, her successor, **Ms. Rachel N. Mayanja** was thanked for her marvelous leadership in CSW this year.

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon explained that International Women's Day is an opportunity for all women and men to unite around a cause that embraces all humankind. Empowering women is not only a stand-alone goal. It is a condition for building better lives for everyone on the planet. He pledged to do

The Roundtable Discussion, "Opportunities and Change: Women as Decision Makers in the Home, in Economics, and in Peacekeeping" had international speakers from diverse sectors. They were Hon. Erinah Rutangye, Parliament member in Uganda, Hon. Dr. Malinee Sukavejaworakit, former Senator from Thailand, Ms. Marilyn Angelucci, representing media and an NGO in Afghanistan, and the Deputy Director of WFWPI UN office and representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Ms. Carolyn Handschin.

Following the Roundtable Discussion, WFWP Thailand presented the winners of the 2<sup>nd</sup> "Color My Heart with Peace" drawing contest. We were honored to have contest advisor, Dr. Chalermchai Kositpipat, the renowned Thai Artist offer a congratulatory message. In addition, Dr. Phillip Bergstrom,



the UNESCO Program Specialist congratulated the award winners. He reminded us of the importance of protecting our environment by following the habits: "Reduce, Re-use and Recycle".

The culmination of the daylong program was the Interracial Bridge of Peace Ceremony. The women were very excited to have new sisters from different races and cultures. Dr. Ratana Tungasvadi from Thailand met her new sister from Uganda, Hon. Erinah Rutangye. Dr. Verachada Buasri of Thailand was paired with a new sister from Lebanon. The program ended with special entertainment enjoyed by all.

In her closing remarks, Dr. Lan Young Moon Park encouraged WFWP leaders, members and friends to continue to renew themselves in order to cultivate an embracing motherly heart and an attitude of servant leadership.



Dr. Lan Young Moon Park together with the winners of the drawing contest

all he can to ensure that women's empowerment not only happens on International Women's Day, but every day.

General Assembly President Ms. Al Khalifa stressed that failure to comply with international standards or exercise due diligence toward ending violence against women is a violation of the human rights of women. Most violence against women and girls happens at home, not only physical violence but sexual and psychological violence too. Attitude changes, prevention and prosecution of violence against women and girls needs to begin at home and in local communities.

President of the Security Council, Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to the UN, Mr. Kumalo was pleased to announce that the previous day, the Security Council adopted the Presidential Statement on Women's Role in the Maintenance of International Peace and Security. It is anchored in the implementation of Resolution 1325 (adopted in 2000) and recognizes the important foundation women have made toward achievement of a better life for all.

During the panel, Ms. Ponte reviewed the progress of the International Criminal Tribunal

against wartime criminals of former Yugoslavia. Ms. Torres observed that while women were raising children at home, men were fighting in war. In Columbia, women are saying that politics does not change women but women change politics.

Mr. Lopes expressed the vision that there should be at least 10% women within the policing arm of peacekeeping operations (DPKO) as a target for gender value and gender mainstreaming. He stressed that men are part of the problem but men can also be a part of the solution.

Ms. Dergham left a lasting impression by emphasizing the importance of telling the stories of victims consistently and repeatedly so we remember. She also stressed insisting on change and challenging the status quo loudly and clearly, again and again. She believes that the media plays an important role in ending impunity for violence against women and girls.

Rev. Graff started his organization because of incidents of New York police badly beating black women suspects. First, 100 black men stood up against this brutality. Now,

**Women's Day, continued on pg. 12**

# 51<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

February 26-Mar 9, 2007 - UN HQ NYC, NY

By Bonnie Berry

The 51<sup>st</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was convened at 10 AM on February 26, 2007 in Conference Room 2 of UN Headquarters in New York City. The main themes and issues of this year's CSW were (a) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: (i) the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child; (ii) evaluation of progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality; (b) emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men; (c) gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters. The theme focusing on ending elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child created the appropriate opportunity for girls to be present at this CSW and give voice to their experiences, concerns and ideas regarding their reality in relation to the theme. It was exciting to see the girls and young women take hold of the chances to participate, speak and show leadership in the process of caucusing and giving input to the official delegations about the outcome document.

Newly appointed Deputy Secretary General Migiro spoke at the opening session. As Tanzania's Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children, she led her country's delegation to the CSW for many years. She committed herself as Deputy Secretary-General to supporting the ongoing work of the CSW. Ms. Migiro went on to affirm the significant contributions of the Commission in improving the lives of women and girls around the world, including the development of normative and policy frameworks to promote equality between men and women. While acknowledging progress she admitted that there is still a long way to go for full implementation, whether it is primary school enrollment, maternal mortality rates, women's economic independence or representation in decision making. Ms. Migiro pledged her support of the proposal to strengthen the UN's gender architecture (entities serving the advancement of women and their functioning), and the goal of 50/50 gender parity within the UN.

As preparation for the 51<sup>st</sup> CSW, Global Youth Action Network, Working Group on Girls, NGO Committee on UNICEF, Voices of Youth and UNICEF organized worldwide input of girls and young women through focus groups, surveys and online discussions. Ideas were compiled from these young women on how to eliminate discrimination and violence



against the girl child. The report entitled "It's time to listen to us!" was presented at the CSW. The key recommendation from the 1318 respondents from 59 countries and eight regions is that "Every girl should get an education". In addition, the respondents indicated that governments hold primary responsibility for protecting girls from discrimination and violence, and families, communities and governments are responsible for empowering girls.

Main sessions of the CSW gave delegate nations the opportunity to report on their country's progress and barriers to progress on each of the themes (listed above). The March 1<sup>st</sup>, afternoon main session dealt with emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men. Panelists included Secretary General's Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Rachel Mayanja, UNIFEM Director, Noleen Heyzer and Director of the UN International Research and Training Institute of Women, Carmen Moreno. Ms. Mayanja stressed that empowering women and gender mainstreaming is the key to tackling poverty and poverty related problems. Ms. Heyzer called for monitoring of treaties and policies that target women's empowerment. Ms. Moreno emphasized the necessity of women having a voice in decision making on all levels so that societies and governments can respond to their needs.

At the conclusion of statements from the panelists, national delegations reported based on the theme of the session. Among the reports came statements from Rwanda, Pakistan, Yemen, Cuba, Switzerland and Costa Rica. The report from Rwanda identified the impact of the period of genocide on women, as well as emerging trends of increased rape and domestic violence. A review of and strengthening of laws regarding violence and discrimination against women was emphasized. Pakistan is focusing on programs to support women and care for women victims of violence. The focus there is raising awareness about the importance of gender equality. Yemen is developing policy and increasing women's participation in political arenas. Yemen is determined to reach to goal of universal primary education for girls by 2015. Cuba's report expressed concern for the numbers of child laborers around the world. Cuba's children all go to school and the country has a 99.6% literacy rate, according to the report. Switzerland expressed particular concern about the growing problem of FGM there, because of the influx of immigrants from Africa. The practice has been outlawed. The report commits to continued efforts to fulfill gender equity in Switzerland. Costa Rica

acknowledged the feminine face of poverty. Girls have the opportunity to go to school by law, but the government is still working to get more girls in school. Also, education funding is challenging due to the amount of debt the country has. The report pushed for debt relief.

Another important aspect of the Commission on the Status of Women is the Parallel Events sponsored by NGOs (nongovernmental organizations). Of special note are the many events held that featured girls as panelists. The World Association for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts had two very eloquent girl activists on the panel. One panelist from Antigua worked to educate her peers about the importance of postponing sexual activity to prevent teen pregnancy. She knows many girls who have one or more children at age 15 or 16. The other was dedicated to an HIV/AIDS prevention education program that encouraged teens to abstain from sexual activity to ensure safety from HIV.

A parallel event with huge impact was "Girls Speak Out" sponsored by UNICEF, the Working Group on Girls and others. Hundreds of American girls made a special trip to the UN to hear this panel, and of course many women attended. The moderators were Katie Couric and the 17-year-old girl who founded the NGO, Girls Learn International for middle and high school girls wanting to learn about human rights and advocate for girls around the world. Katie began by emphasizing that "to change the world, you have to learn about the world". The panelists were young women between the ages of 15 and 18. They were from Jordan, Thailand, Zambia, Armenia, Nepal and Democratic Republic of Congo. These young women showed mighty courage in telling their stories and those of the girls and women of their country. From Bangkok came stories of poor girls as young as eight years old sold into prostitution by their own families. The girl from Jordan spoke about cultural complexities that keep girls out of school. The girl from Congo spoke tearfully about her experience being recruited as a child soldier, full of hope to make a difference for her country and earn money for her family only to be submitted to the hell of sexual slavery. She touched the hearts of all in the room. Tears were shed as the audience stood and applauded her for over five minutes to show support and recognition for her courage to come so far and speak so honestly about her suffering. The Armenian girl talked about the isolation and vulnerability to exploitation of girls with disabilities. From Nepal came stories of lack of access to education. The Zambian girl, raped at age 9, was infected with HIV. These girls

51<sup>st</sup> CSW, continued on pg. 12

# Activities Around the World in 2006

## Overseas Volunteers from WFWP Japan in Africa

### The Republic of Rwanda

#### Bond of Heart Transcending the Walls of Culture

By Marie Nozaki, Rwanda Delegate

In Rwanda, wars among tribes have long been fought. This has created a situation where 70% of the population is women.



In 1996 WFWP started a sewing school with ten treadle sewing machines. We opened New Hope Vocational School in 1998. Initially, we started a sewing course and a language course. Later, a stitching course, a beauty/barber course and a cooking course were added. All students also attend a management course, now. There are approximately 130 students. Students graduate after one year. The employment rate for graduates is around 40%. In 1999 we created a foster-home system to support poor students.

Important components of our program are the moral education course and the care given to those students who have faced trauma in their lives. Students cannot write or read when they enter the school, but they come to learn technical skills and develop their confidence. They start working with hearts full of hope. It is truly moving to see them grow.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the school operation, school management was shifted from the Japanese delegation to the local staff. In order to build a strong relationship of trust with the new President of the school, efforts were made to deepen understanding between us, by eating and living together and confiding in each other. In order to teach the value of the donations received, we lived simply and frugally both in private life and in public life. We spared no pains to negotiate the lowest prices for materials to be purchased.

After the local staff inherited most of the work, they were entrusted with the running of the school. The Japanese delegation would reflect with the local staff, evaluate and discuss together, and then proceed. 2007 marks the fourth year since the local staff began to manage the school. The trusting relationship we built is directly linked to the smooth management of the school.

Reflecting back over the years, there was a time when I was overwhelmed with so much fear that all my hair fell out in two weeks time. However, this incident gave me an opportunity to reflect on my limitations and realize the value of the local staff. This led me to have the attitude that, "Even if I lose my hair, I will love Rwanda with all my heart." I am deeply grateful to Rwanda and my experiences there; because of the way my heart grew and developed.



### Ethiopia

#### Poverty and Low School Enrollment Rate

Ethiopia is proud of her rich Christian culture and the reality that the nation was never colonized. However, the people have struggled through poverty, starvation and civil wars for a long time. According to the 2005 Human Development Report by UNDP (United Nations Development Program), the Human Development Index of Ethiopia, which suggests the wealth of the country and is measured according to the GDP, average life span, literacy rate and school enrollment rate of each nation, is 170<sup>th</sup> in the world. Human development in Ethiopia is one of the most delayed in the world.



### The Republic of Cameroon

#### AIDS Prevention Education Becomes Popular Ten Years of AIDS Prevention Education at Middle and High Schools

by Keiko Takahashi,  
Cameroon Delegate

In the Republic of Cameroon, deaths due to AIDS have been increasing rapidly in recent years. The government and all NGOs are highly dedicated to AIDS prevention. Spreading education about AIDS prevention is an urgent task that brings a decrease in the number of AIDS orphans as well as a decrease in AIDS infection rates and improvement in standards of living.



WFWP Cameroon has been conducting AIDS Prevention Education that focuses on teaching self-control for the last 10 years. We hold seminars in local villages that teach women sexual morality and how to raise healthy youth. In middle schools and high schools, we conduct after school programs that include AIDS Prevention Education. Teaching staff are equipped with adequate skills and experiences, and taught to help students think about their future and the future of their country. Staff teaches about the serious social problems related to AIDS and discusses the importance of practicing sexual morality.

There are no projectors or other audiovisual equipment in the schools, so we conduct classes in person. We visit each school many times until all students in all classes receive the curriculum. As a result, much time and expense are inevitable to make sure all children are served.

It takes many years for the results of AIDS Prevention Education to be seen. Because there is no quick fix, one challenge has been the difficulty of forging partnerships with other organizations.

The AIDS Prevention Education we provide in schools has been well received and welcomed. Year after year, the number of programs is increasing. WFWP Cameroon has become widely known through these programs. Last year, thanks to the cooperation of a Cabinet Minister from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family, we were able to create partnerships and work with many women's organizations under the umbrella of this Ministry.

Our training center in the village of Baff, in the northwest region of Cameroon has been under construction since 1994. It is nearly complete. Only floor and ceiling need to be installed. After completion, the training center will be used for seminars and workshops of several days duration with participants staying at the training center during the courses.



The government is working to fulfill the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. However, there is no system of compulsory education, and the school enrollment rate for children is extremely low.

#### Providing Elementary Education through Literacy Classroom

One Hope Garden was founded by WFWP in 1997. The school provides literacy skills for poor children. Once children complete the program, they are ready to attend public elementary school. Ten areas of Warada in the capital city of Addis Ababa are served by the program. A free three-year elementary education program is offered to the school age



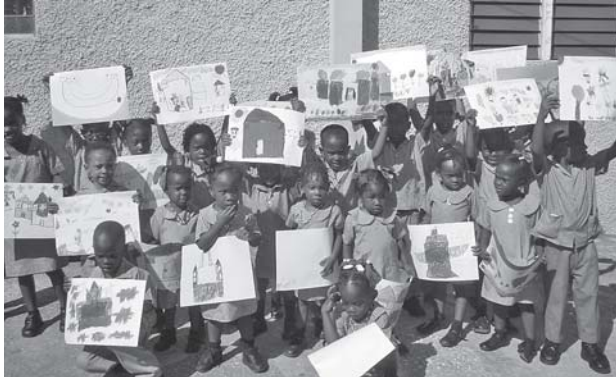
# Activities Around the World in 2006

## Overseas Volunteers from WFWP Japan in Latin America

### Jamaica

#### Supporting Orphans and Kindergarten Students

The Caribbean Island of Jamaica is a production center for Blue Mountain Coffee and is well known as the birthplace of Reggae Music. However, Jamaica carries various challenges. The economy is stagnant. The difference between rich and poor is huge. Among childbearing women, 60% are single mothers, many of whom bear children by several different fathers. In the towns and villages, there are so many abandoned children everywhere. In the capital city of Kingston alone, there are about forty orphanages or similar facilities.



WFWP volunteers have been doing cleaning at the National Children's Home, offering a Japanese language class and offering financial and material donations since 1998. Beginning in 1999, four orphans have been receiving scholarships for school tuition. They are excellent students. One received recognition as an honor student from a local church. Last year, a support team from Japan visited Jamaica. Children taught them reggae dance. After eight years of investment, trusting relationships are deepening.

Saint Francis Basic School is a kindergarten located in the midst of a poor district in Kingston. It was started by a Christian minister who served as the first principal. There are currently forty-six students from age 3 to 6. At the request of the principal, WFWP began supporting the kindergarten in September, 2001. The same year, we began to develop interaction between these children and children in Osaka, Japan by exchanging children's drawings and photos. This year marks the 5<sup>th</sup> year of this project. After the first principal passed away in January 2003, a former nurse took over the responsibility of principal and the kindergarten continues to run. Since 2003, a WFWP representative has been participating in handing out graduation certificates to children during the graduation ceremony. WFWP is deepening its relationship with Saint Francis Basic School. We have also been conducting training on strengthening families, responsibilities of mothers and fathers and moral education for the kindergarten teachers, the nurses and the guardians of the children.



### Ethiopia, contd from pg. 8

children from poor families. The school has a 2-part system: a morning school and an afternoon school. Subjects include the official language of Amuhara, math, English, social science, arts, music and gym. School uniforms were introduced in 2002. A nurse room and indoor plumbing were installed in 2003.

After students complete the program, they take an exam and are admitted to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade public elementary school. WFWP provides uniforms and school supplies to the students and supports them through a foster-parent system after they are admitted to the public school.

This education project has received recognition from Ethiopia's Government Office of Education. It is run in cooperative partnership

### Honduras

#### AIDS prevention education and Foster-parents program supporting AIDS orphans

One third of HIV positive people in all of Central America live in Honduras. According to the "HIV/AIDS Current Information 2005" report, published by UNAIDS and the World Health Organization, AIDS is the No. 1 cause of death for women in Honduras.

WFWP Honduras has been conducting AIDS prevention education in many communities in Honduras since 1994. In 1998, we focused our efforts in the Florence district located in San Antonio, Comayagua State, where the HIV infection rate was extremely high. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, we conducted AIDS Prevention Seminars to Christian Church congregations, schoolteachers, local leaders and the public. However, the number of people dying from AIDS knows no end.

In 2000, along with the AIDS prevention education program, WFWP volunteers decided to support AIDS orphans. First, we recruited foster-parents in Japan for 11 orphans ranging in age from 1 to 13. Foster-parents support these children with living expenses and school tuition and expenses. In addition, the foster parents send gifts for the children on their birthdays or Christmas. Thanks to the foster-parents' support, these children became more lively. Their grades in school improved as well. 2004 was the 10<sup>th</sup> year since the founding of the foster-parent system in Honduras. That year, the WFWP delegates from Japan turned these activities over to the Honduran WFWP members. Today the number of supporters of the AIDS orphans has increased. Several other NGO groups also now come to the Florence district with WFWP members and send milk, soybean processed foods and other goods.

Antonio, who was in fourth grade when he was adopted by his foster-parents, is now a high school student and is involved in WFWP international youth volunteer activities. He has developed a sincere desire to serve others.

One day, an unexpected thing happened to Japanese delegate, Ms. Kashiko Mine. It was the seventh year she had been involved in the volunteer programs in Honduras. A Honduran couple, with whom she was developing a very close relationship, offered their newborn daughter to Ms. Mine to be adopted by her. She had been struggling with infertility. "I wanted to love these Honduran children as if they were my own children, and even at times I had a dream of becoming a mother of Honduras, even though this may sound exaggerated. However, I never imagined that my secret wish I held in my heart would be a reality," says Ms. Mine. This year her adopted daughter will be 5 years old. The child speaks Japanese in Kyushu dialect, which is where she currently resides. She brings warm smiles to the people around her with her mastery of the dialect.



with local staff, WFWP volunteers and benefactors in Japan. Last year, 213 students attended One Hope Garden. Eighty-five students graduated and were admitted to the public elementary school.

WFWP volunteer, Ms. Tomoko Kaneda explains her aspiration, "Students are studying and trying hard in spite of their severe and difficult situation. I can never forget their bright smiles and personalities. My aspiration is to see all children who learn at One Hope Garden pass the national exam and get admitted to the University of Addis Ababa. Another aspiration we have for the future is to build more schools."



# Activities Around the World in 2006

## Overseas Volunteers from WFPW Japan in Asia

### The Union of Myanmar

#### Creating an Environment Where Children Can Learn

Myanmar has been on friendly diplomatic terms with Japan since a Peace Treaty was signed in 1954. The country of Myanmar is 1.8% larger than Japan. The population is approximately 52 million people. Seventy percent of the residents are Burmese. The rest of the population is made up of about 135 different large and small ethnic groups. The name of the country was changed from Burma to Myanmar in 1989 by the current ruling group. In November of 2005, the capital city moved from Rangoon to the inland city of Pinmana. Ninety percent of people in Myanmar are Buddhists. The rate of crime is low. The people are known for their very gentle character.

WFPW volunteers began the School Health Hygiene and Environmental Maintenance Project in 1998 in cooperation with the Department of Health. Bathrooms, water supply tanks and washing rooms in seventeen elementary and middle schools have been built where hygiene facilities were previously lacking. Lessons on basic hygiene including how to wash hands and brush teeth were also provided to the students.



A foster-parent system was set up in 1997. Through this program, 238 people have received support. Currently Japanese foster families are supporting 160 children, including 3 college students.

Inspired by her husband's desire to build a school in Myanmar, foster parent Tomoko Hayashi built an elementary school in the Saticanandu village. There was an elementary school in this village. But it was so damaged that the ceiling was almost falling. So Mrs. Hayashi decided to re-build the school. When Mrs. Hayashi was in Saticanandu to participate in the school's Opening Ceremony, she was so moved by the students' politeness and good manners even though their lives were so difficult, that she was overcome with emotion and fought to hold back her tears.

"The youth crimes that are rampant in Japan are unthinkable in this country," says Ms. Eiko Yoshimatsu, a WFPW delegate to Myanmar.

"If you go to Pagoda (temple shrine in Myanmar), there are people praying fervently and with devotion. They look up the top of the golden Pagoda, then put their palms together and pray again. On the wall of Pagoda, a picture of hell is hanging. It depicts the place where evildoers go after they die. Every time children go to pray there, they see this picture and imprint this scene in their young hearts. Perhaps in this way they naturally come to believe in the next life and learn how they should live in this world." Ms. Yoshimatsu had a tearful first meeting with her foster child last year.



### Nepal

#### Supporting Women's Independence through Sewing and Other Skills

By Yukiko Fujita, Nepal Delegate

Nepal is the country which has the highest mountains, the Himalayas. It is a beautiful country, richly blessed with nature. Many tourists come to Nepal from all around the world. It is the only nation in the world whose national religion is Hindu. But the birthplace of Buddha is in the town called Lumbini, in western Nepal. This created some cultural influence from Buddhism. The people of Nepal are very warm and gentle.

On the other hand, the government is unstable. There are still many issues like the remnants of the Caste System, a huge gap between rich and poor, discrimination against women and more. The death rate of nursing babies and pregnant women is quite high, so the average life span for women is especially short. The average life span of men is sixty and for women, fifty-nine. The rate of literacy is 49%, which is the lowest among Asian countries. In poor families in the farming region, getting a daily meal is a struggle. Many children inevitably have to work. Also, the belief that women do not need education is prevalent. In this region, the literacy rate of women is even lower, merely 35%.

In February 2005, WFPW opened the Creative Training Center in the Techo Region, located south of the capital city of Kathmandu. Currently thirty-four students are learning the curriculum, which includes general education for women, from sewing to cooking, nutrition, language, to moral education and maternity classes. The sewing class is especially popular because each student gets to use a sewing machine, and students can effectively go from the basics to making casual clothes within one year.



Students are all very motivated. Even if they do not have money to buy materials to use in class, they take orders from acquaintances and receive materials this way. By making clothes for others, they are earning income as they learn. We provide microcredit financing for qualified graduates who have a goal of opening a tailor shop.

In 2006, there was a period when we could not hold classes due to the unstable political situation. Nevertheless, we are dedicated to managing this Center with the cooperation of the local staff.



**WFWP Event, contd from pg. 1**

women. It does not reflect the mutual interdependence that is characteristic of our human life and existence. It also does not account for the spiritual essence of human beings. In conclusion, Dr. Noda asserted that the first step to ending discrimination and violence against the girl child is to stop applying the category of "thing" to girls and women and to foster appreciation for their innate value in the context of their relationships with others, particularly within the family.

**Mrs. Rajeswari Menon,**

award winning educator and principal of SBOA School (Junior College) in India reviewed the empowerment of women and girls in India. She reflected back and explained that women and girls had made strides in getting education and entering traditionally male dominated professions. But she lamented that women in India usually had to carry the weight of both career and household responsibilities traditionally born by women. Mrs. Menon asserted that value systems must be changed, those of men and boys, but most importantly, the value systems of the girls themselves. As an educator and principal of a school with 6000 students, Mrs. Menon emphasized that school is a great place to start changing value systems. She continued by describing the tragic customs of dowry, child marriage, female infanticide and female feticide, whose main purpose is economic. Among poor families, a girl is considered a burden in India. Murders of girls have occurred in instances when dowries are inadequate or not paid in full. In many families in India, women are still raised to understand that their one and only purpose is to serve a man. In their minds, their value comes to be inseparable from their husband. Even though it is outlawed, the custom of Sati, the widow throwing herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, is still practiced. Mrs. Menon explained that though laws may be changed, traditions and customs die harder and take longer to change. She indicated that boys and girls both need to be re-educated about the value of girls. Parents need education about this as well. She is encouraged that many NGOs and government agencies are working on this issue but she feels that the work needs to continue more intensively and on many levels, particularly in rural areas, which lag behind in this area. Mrs. Menon concluded with a one hundred year old poem of Subramania Bharati,



**"We will burn the foolishness  
That despises womenfolk  
No more subservience or slavery  
In any walk of life  
Man and woman shall equal be  
In this land of ours"**

The final speaker was **Mrs. Nora Spurgin**, MSW, principal of Bridgeport International Academy high school in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Mrs. Spurgin eloquently explained that the formation of a girl's value system begins very early as she internalizes the beliefs of her relatives, peers and community. When those beliefs encourage choices that prove harmful to the girl child and changes are indicated, all spheres of her life must be addressed including religion, culture, education, economy and personal experience. In proceeding with re-education, Mrs. Spurgin indicated that sensitivity is paramount with respect to religion, as it is through religion that a girl finds her place in her community and before her creator. She suggests a redefining or expansion of existing beliefs, increasing a girl's self-esteem and dignity. If this is not handled sensitively, the girl could find herself in conflict with her community or within herself. In regard to facilitating the girl child in overcoming cultural barriers, Mrs. Spurgin explained that patient and respectful efforts must be made at whatever pace the community is able to tolerate. According to Mrs. Spurgin, education can gradually change value systems by helping students to see how cultural or religious practices may affect larger issues such as justice and equality. She stressed that those attempting to change the situation need to educate themselves about the unique beliefs and values of the group and the advocates and pressures both for and against change. Educating the child can sometimes best be accomplished by exposing that child to those who have different, more supportive value systems. Educating the families as to practical advantages to making the changes in value systems can make a difference. Educating the community leaders is also a good way to bring about change. When the leaders can understand the positive impact of change, they can influence the majority of the community quite rapidly. Mrs. Spurgin gave two practical examples of empowering women economically, which shifted the view of the community. The Oxcart Project in Niger gave an ox and cart to women in a village for transporting water. This empowered women economically and the cart quickly became the transportation for the village. This resource changed the status of the women in the community. She also cited the Godparents Association, which paid for schooling of girls in Uganda who refused the ritual of feminine genital mutilation. Funding for the girls education removed the economic consequences to the girl and her family of not having the procedure performed. Finally, Mrs. Spurgin discussed the way that personal life experience can play a role in transforming value systems. Educational experiences and service learning



through projects can help students to see life in a new way. Again, she stressed the importance of using wisdom and respect for existing traditions and practices, and raising awareness in a natural step-by-step process. She concluded that transforming value systems is the most effective and permanent force for change. It takes a patient and sustained commitment and willingness to be involved over a long period.

Questions and comments from the diverse audience were lively. Concerns were expressed about change agents not respecting the useful and healthy traditional views and practices. Mrs. Spurgin responded that change should be targeted only toward those beliefs that supported discrimination and violence against girls and women. The comment was made that particularly western and developed countries must take stock regarding the value systems that are being exported via the media and industry to developing countries and communities. A behavioral psychologist commented that it is one thing to change values and beliefs, but that real change involves behavior change. The topic of transforming value systems was clearly one that participants sincerely wanted to understand. The closing comment came in reference to Dr. Noda's assertion of men and women's co-existence together. The comment was that even better, we experience co-realization, helping one another grow as people.



**World Peace Day, contd from pg. 5**

association, "Children for Peace" that gave many affected children the opportunity to contribute to peacebuilding by involving them in local projects. The final panelist, Silvi Sterr, from the International Peace Bureau, opened by defining the phrase "sustainable disarmament for sustainable development" then introduced the concept of budget analysis as an advocacy tool. "An affordable 10% of any military budget would go a long way to eradicate poverty", she concluded.

(Carolyn Handschin served as Rapporteur for the Working Group on Peace).



## WFWPI Signed Joint NGO Statements

One of the privileges for NGOs in Consultative Status is the opportunity to submit statements (either individually or in collaboration with other NGOs) to various UN entities and functions. Below is a list of recent statements that WFWPI signed. Complete statements available at [www.wfwp.org](http://www.wfwp.org).

1. Statement on Darfur to Human Rights Council Special Session on December 11, 2006
2. Statement of Working Group of Girls to the Commission on the Status of Women, 51<sup>st</sup> Session with 28 NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC and Committee on UNICEF.
3. Statement on the Role of Men and Boys in achieving gender equality to the Commission on the Status of Women, 51<sup>st</sup> Session with 13 NGO in Consultative Status with ECOSOC on December 26, 2006.
4. Statement on Prostitution and Trafficking to the Commission on the Status of Women, 51<sup>st</sup> session.

### *Women's Day, contd from pg. 6*

memberships have grown to 10,000 members in 160 branches in USA and Africa. He stressed that men and women should have mutual respect because our children and history are watching us.

Mr. Minerson founded the White Ribbon Campaign after fourteen women were targeted and murdered in Canada in 1989. The symbol of the white ribbon was born in 1991, symbolizing the vision of ending gender-based violence and the importance of speaking out about the role of men and their collective responsibility. He concluded that to be successful in ending men's violence against women, good partnerships with other organizations, especially women's organizations are needed because gender means both men and women.

It was quite an impressive panel because the speakers informed and ensured that not only women's groups, but also men's groups are rising to the challenge of ending impunity for violence against women and girls. It gave us great hope and confidence that even though it might take time to achieve, we are heading in the right direction in this endeavor.

(To find more information on this event, please visit [www.un.org/event/women/iwd/2007](http://www.un.org/event/women/iwd/2007))



### *51st CSW, contd from pg. 7*

and their stories put a face on the grim reality of the suffering that many girls and women experience. It brought the reality home to those in attendance. Hopefully this panel serves to inspire everyone to further action in their own communities and nations.

In addition to the main sessions, caucusing, briefings and parallel events, there was much grassroots activity and brainstorming toward a fifth world women's conference. This movement touched the hearts and visions of many NGO representatives. Quite a number of groups pledged to continue the efforts to organize this to show unity to the world among the community of women, for the fulfillment of the Beijing Platform of Action created almost twelve years ago as an outcome document of the fourth world women's conference in Beijing, as well as determination and passion for the advancement of women worldwide.

The finale of the Commission on the Status of Women was the commemoration of International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>. It is a good time to remember that although many of us as women enjoy extensive rights and freedoms, 70% of the poor in the world are women. Half the agricultural work in the world is done by women, but women only own 1% of the land. Women and children suffer disproportionately in the wake of armed conflict, and so on. So we cannot say that we celebrate International Women's Day, instead it is a day to reflect on the reality of women's and girls' predicament both positive and detrimental.

(Thanks to Susan Bradbury, contributor to this article.)



### *Common Humanity, contd from pg. 3*

social condition of people is crucial. According to *H.E. Mr. Martti Ahtisaari*, use of ICTs has a positive impact on development. Improved participation of women in the information society and equal participation of men and women are vital to development. Peace is also necessary for sustainable development to occur. The use of ICTs in humanitarian assistance and crisis management operations creates conditions for sustainable security and development. To achieve equal distribution of ICTs, all stakeholders must work together. The UN and regional organizations such as European Union, OSCE, NATO and African Union are in key positions to face current threats to security and development. Mr. Ahtisaari concluded that he hopes these organizations work together coherently and effectively. *Ms. Julia Ormond* gave an overview on the transnational crimes of trafficking and slavery. Transnational crimes can be solved if governments and concerned citizens work together. There are 2.4 million victims of trafficking and 17 million victims of slavery. Rapid growth of technology brings the negative impact of innocent children exposed to predators lurking on the internet. Can internet be blamed for child prostitution? The answer is NO. Humanity is responsible and must be watchful as we learn how to balance ICT use and responsibility. *Ms. Katherine Sierra* explained the inequality in the ICT revolution. A comprehensive approach to development is vital. Mobile phones have reached half the

world population. Developing countries lead the way in the mobile phone revolution, particularly China. Fifty-five million people per day send text messages worldwide. Internet use quadrupled between 2004 and 2005. Policies and regulations have been the key to progress in ICT. Ms. Sierra concluded that by working together we can bring the world closer to shared goals and common values. *Ms. Louise T. Blouin Mac Bain* challenged us to think globally and long term. The valleys between rich and poor are deeper than ever. We know too little about the digital divide. Dialogue is easy now, with the internet paving the way to a deeper cultural understanding. Technology has the power to bridge divides in the world.

The messages echoed throughout the session were about shared responsibility and cooperation. The forum aimed to revive the spirit of cooperation by emphasizing that the global community is one family with common values and to promote the concept of establishing equity and fairness through utilizing the potential of ICT and strengthening the United Nations as a positive force for good. Solutions must be based on inclusion and partnership, sharing global public goods, (especially ICT, whose benefits reach across borders, generations and populations), promoting equity, eradication of diseases, environmental sustainability, peace and security.



## Upcoming Events 2007

- April 10: 15<sup>th</sup> WFWP Anniversary
- May 15: International Day of Families
- July 2-27: ECOSOC Substantive Session-Geneva
- Aug. 12: International Youth Day
- Sept. 5-7: 60th DPI/NGO Conference, New York
- Sept. 18: Opening Day of 62nd Session of the General Assembly
- Sept. 21: International Day of Peace
- Oct.\*: WFWP 8th International Leaders' Workshop

(\* tentative)