



VOW

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of
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Lessons from 58th CSW

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The 58th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women ('Commission') was held on 10-21 March 2014 at the United Nations in New York. The theme of the meeting was—"Challenges and achievements in the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Women and Girls". This meeting was significant because its deliberations were a precursor to the Post 2015 agenda for development that will take place in 2015. The Commission produces a negotiated text called Agreed Conclusions.

In reviewing the implementation of the MDGs, the Commission determined that overall progress for women and girls across all the Millennium Development Goals remains slow and uneven, including on Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality, both within and between countries; and no country has achieved equality for women and girls. The Commission noted that several critical issues related to gender equality were not adequately addressed by the MDGs such as, inter alia: violence against women and girls; child, early and forced marriage; women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid work, women's low paid and gender stereotyped work, women's equal access to, control and ownership of assets and productive resources including land, energy and fuel, and women's inheritance rights; women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels.

Several indicators to monitor the MDGs are not disaggregated by sex, age and other factors and therefore do not provide sufficient information about the situation of women throughout their life cycle.

Pointing to the inevitable link



58th Commission on the Status of Women in session.

between gender equality and economic and social rights, the Commission reaffirmed the need to adhere to existing universal and international standards for the realization of women's human rights with a rejoinder to work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the full implementation of CEDAW and the ratification and use of its Optional Protocol.

The Commission gave due recognition to the work of civil society and feminist groups and urged the protection of women's human rights defenders. Controversial issues dividing the North and the South centred on, among others, de-linking human rights from the right to development, referring to families in the plural, state obligation to fulfil rights, enhancing North-South cooperation, sexual rights, and harmful traditional practices. While both sides lost some and won some, the biggest trade off in my view was the deletion of this paragraph,

"The Commission reaffirms the sovereign right of each country to implement the recommendations in the present document, consistent with national laws and development priorities with full respect for the various religious and ethical values

and cultural backgrounds of its people, and inconformity with universally recognized international human rights." as against not mentioning LGBT rights.

There were fierce stand offs dragging for 2 weeks sometimes on certain paragraphs or certain paragraphs or expressions with negotiations going on until 4AM on certain days. The divide between North and South on priorities and issues was obvious.

Despite the fact that the Agreed Conclusions recognizes the importance of a global economic and financial architecture that fosters an enabling environment for the realization of all human rights for women and girls, as critics have pointed out the language is not specific enough to guide international trade and finance architecture towards a fundamental, development-oriented, rights-based, structural reform that respects the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation. The weakness in the text generally is its vagueness and abstraction.

There is also problematic language on public-private partnerships and on 'voluntary innovative' financing mechanisms, which fails to recognize non-state actors as duty-bearers that must be held accountable for human rights obligations (cont. on page 2)

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Lessons from 58th CSW

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Because of the intransigent divide between the North and the South inter-governmental processes for affirming and facilitating the involvement of progressive human rights standards, do not give much hope. Some topics such as—sexual rights, LGBT rights, macro-economic policies, trade relations, financing for human rights, the pre-eminence of culture, religion and state sovereignty as determinants of the human rights of women are

still fiercely debated after 20 years and only traded off. The irony is that state sovereignty, culture or religion does not seem to play any role in trade relations and agreements.

Women's rights activists need to be more prepared for the debates that will determine the Post 2015 Development agenda that will take place in 2014-15.

Please find the full text of the Agreed Conclusions at this link: <http://www.unwomen.org/co/csw/csw58-2014>.

IWRAP AP in ACSC/APF

ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ ASEAN People's Forum ('ACSC/APF') was held from 21-23 March 2014 at the Myanmar Convention Centre in Yangon, Myanmar. ACSC/APF is a civil society forum held independently and parallel to the ASEAN Summit, which Myanmar will host for the first time since it joined as ASEAN member in 1997. Themed "Advancing ASEAN Peoples' Solidarity towards Sustainable Peace, Development, Justice and Democratization", the ACSC/APF this year drew more than 3000 participants. Voices of civil societies are reflected in the Outcome Statement, which includes recommendations for consideration by the ASEAN leaders of the 24th ASEAN Summit. A condensed form of the Outcome Statement will be presented at an interface meeting with the ASEAN leaders in May 2014.

Conducting Workshop

IWRAP Asia Pacific, APWLD and CORD-AID jointly organized a workshop themed "Countering Invisibility: Advancing Women's Peace and Security in the ASEAN Community". The workshop focused on the legal framework for protection of women's rights to peace and security in the region, including the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 30 and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The workshop discussed the context of conflict in Myanmar and West Papua, and the need to address continuing human rights violations committed during conflict and perpetrated by state actors within ASEAN. The work-



(left) 'Countering Invisibility' workshop in session



(right) Drafting Committee working on the Outcome Statement

shop was paneled by Urmila Bhoola (IWRAP Asia Pacific), Tin Tin Nyo (Women's League Burma), Frederika Korain (specialist in gender and peace-building; West Papua), and Misun Woo (APWLD).

Three of the key recommendations from the workshop were reflected in the APF Outcome Statement (view at www.aseanpeople.org).

Drafting Committee

IWRAP Asia Pacific was also part of the Drafting Committee of the ACSC/APF 2014, consisting of national and regional representatives. The Committee was responsible for consolidating recommendations from the 35 workshops in the form of an Outcome Statement. The draft Outcome Statement was reviewed for inputs by civil society actors on the last day of the Forum before being adopted.

Young Women Making Change

IWRAP Asia Pacific mentored and facilitated the participation of four young women from Malaysia, Timor Leste, Vietnam and Lao PDR in ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF) and ACSC/APF 2014. AYF is a separate forum preceding APF to share local/regional issues affecting youth and to promote meaningful youth engagement in ASEAN. Themed "One Community, One Strategy; Youths for Unity! Strengthening the Power of Youth Engagement in Building a Peaceful and Productive ASEAN Community" and resembling APF, the young women discussed SRHR issues, contributed to the Youth Statement (download at www.aseanyouthforum.org) and strategies on enhancing visibility of youth at APF.

Malaysia will hold the next ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ ASEAN People's Forum in 2015.

Programme Highlight: Young Women Making Change



'Young Women Making Change' participating at ACSC/APF: (from left) Kim - Malaysia, Estela - Timor Leste, Ngan - Vietnam, Mikhan - Lao PDR.

Funded by UN Women, this project aims to strengthen the voices of young women as gender equality advocates in Lao PDR, Timor Leste, Vietnam and Malaysia. The 2.5 year project (2013-2015) was conceptualized to address a gap observed after working in the region for 20 years - the rate of increase of young women in rights advocacy especially from a feminist perspective was lacking.

Through the Young Women Making Change' project, we support the activism

of young women to provide them with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience which will strengthen the participation and the capacity of young women activists as actors in CEDAW implementation and gender equality.

IWRAW Asia Pacific jointly partners with national NGOs in each country (Gender Development Association, Alola Foundation, CGFED, and KRYSS) to mentor, guide, and connect the young women with more experienced 'femtors'.

"This is a precious experience that I have gained which opened up my mind and changed my attitude of so many things, it gave me a very strong feeling to improve my society.

- Mikhan, Lao PDR on attending the ASEAN Youth Forum and ASEAN People's Forum



New Team Members

We are happy to introduce two new Programme Officers working permanently as part of IWRAW Asia Pacific Team: **Amarjargal Davjajev** from Mongolia (Amraa, left) and **Sanyu Awori** from Kenya (Sanyu, right).

Amarjargal (Amraa) holds degree a Law (LLB) from Ulanbaatar Erdem Law Institute in Mongolia (2001) Licensed lawyer and member of the Lawyer's Bar Association in Mongolia (2004). Amarjargal's background is in the areas of victim's protection and strategic litigation. She is an anti-trafficking expert and author of several books in mentioned issues. Prior to joining IWRAW AP she served as an Executive Director for the Center for Human Rights and Development in Ulaanbaatar.

Sanyu has a Bachelor of Law (LLB) and a Masters in Human Rights Law (with Distinction) from the University of Nottingham. Prior to joining IWRAW AP, Sanyu has worked for the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative based in Delhi where she focused on human rights advocacy in Commonwealth countries. Sanyu has also researched for the Human Rights Law Centre in Nottingham and done community work with asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.

Please extend a very warm welcome to these exceptional women!

Quarter 2 Calendar

In Quarter 1, we had a successful 57th Global to Local CEDAW Review Process in February and participated in the ASEAN Civil Society Conference / ASEAN People's Forum in Yangon, Myanmar in March. Our 3-year plan strategy has taken effect, and gradually we are more and more absorbed into the implementation of scheduled activities.

In **April**, we will hold a National Consultation with the women machineries in Lao PDR. We will also be conducting a Shadow Report Training in Mauritania.

In **May**, a Training of Trainers is scheduled in Vietnam as part of the FGE project (see Programme Highlight, above). This training will precede 4 national-level Skills Trainings in Malaysia, Vietnam, Timor Leste and Lao PDR scheduled from May through July. In Timor Leste we will also hold a Shadow Report Training as well as the CCF (CEDAW Compliance Framework) Assessment Meeting.

In **June**, a Lawyers' Training is planned for Cambodia. The 58th Global to Local CEDAW Review process where countries Central African Republic, Georgia, India, Lithuania, Mauritania, Peru, Swaziland, and Syrian Arab Republic are up for reporting.

Watch this space for our quarterly programme updates!

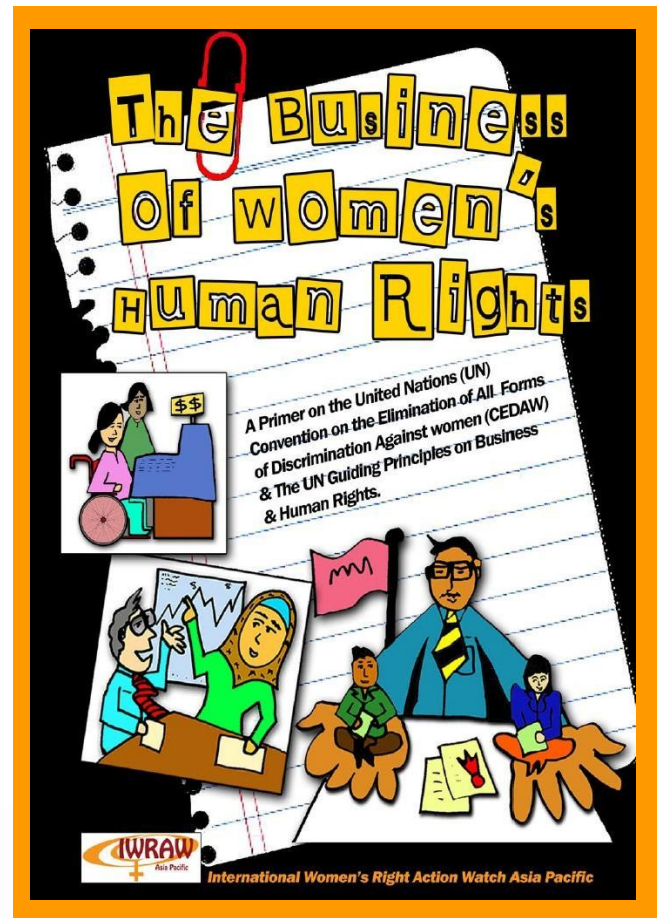
Highlight: New Publication

Title: The Business of Women's Human Rights: A Primer on the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) & the UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights (UNGPR) (2014).

This user friendly primer, made possible with the support of Oxfam Novib, is a first easy reference for grassroots and national level civil society organisations to understand the linkages between CEDAW and UNGP. CEDAW was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979 and came into force in 1981. In June 2011, the Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the Guiding Principles and created a new special mechanism, the UN working Group on Business and Human Rights.

This creative booklet is the result of numerous requests from NGOs wanting to constructively engage with businesses and corporations. We hope that this primer will help users to understand and discover the effective mechanisms to promote and advance women's human rights.

You can download the document at IWRAW AP website or contact us at iwraw-ap@iwraw-ap.org for physical copies.



- *The Guiding Principles & CEDAW in Collaboration with Non-State Business Actors*
- *CEDAW & the Businesses' Approach to Protecting Women's Rights*
- *Code of Conduct for Business on Gender Equality*
- *What Motivates Businesses to Address Human Rights Impacts*
- *What can Businesses do to Address Human Rights?*



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International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific is an international women's human rights organisation. Since 1993, we have worked to contribute to the progressive interpretation and realisation of the human rights of women through the lens of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international human rights treaties.

We promote the domestic implementation of inter-national human rights standards by building the capacity of women and human rights advocates to claim and realise women's human rights. We do this through our 3 key strategies Building Capacity for Change, Enhancing Realisation of Rights and Information, Dissemination Application and Exchange Strategy (IDEAS) which encompass training, communication, information, education, advocacy and support national level women's organizations and community groups working to improve the lives of women.