

ANNUAL REPORT

IWRAW ASIA PACIFIC

2008

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific
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Our Annual Report has always given us an opportunity to review and reflect and to set the stage for how we will continue to strategise and implement the mission and objectives of the organization.

The success of our work has been enabled in a large measure by the various advisory and programme management committees; the Advisory Committee, the Programme Management Team of the From Global to Local programme, the OPCEDAW Advisory Group, the Capacity Building Advisory Group, and all other advisors, whose advice and inputs enrich and bring strength to our work.

We are especially grateful to our Pool of Resource Persons for their constant support in helping us think things through whenever we have asked; in addition to supporting us in the implementation of our capacity building work. It is their active participation and their generosity in giving us their time and efforts which we are truly humbled by.

And to our national and regional partners, we are grateful for their faith and for the support and challenge they continue to present to us through their drive and activism.

We also wish to recognize the generosity of our donors who continue to demonstrate their support in our vision and organizational mission; without which our work could not have been carried out. We wish to thank Ford Foundation - South Asia, HIVOS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands, and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Oxfam Novib, UNFPA- New York, UNIFEM SEA, UNIFEM-New York and UNICEF New York.

Our annual report is dedicated to this international family of people committed to work for realization of equality and non-discrimination for women of the world.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2008 was an eventful year in the history of International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific), with affirmation of old partnerships and the on-going work of the organization as well as the opening up of new opportunities and arenas to take advocacy for women's human rights forward.

IWRAP Asia Pacific remains committed to seeing the organization as a catalyst in building women's capacity for change and in enhancing the realisation of the human rights of women through:

- * The effective implementation of human rights norms and standards as established in international human rights law, including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and through international human rights mechanisms and procedures in order to enable the full enjoyment of all human rights by all;
- * The inclusion of women's voice and concerns in standard-setting processes at national and international human rights arenas and forums, and in the formulation of policies and laws at the local and global level;
- * The development of new knowledge on women's human rights, in particular in relation to CEDAW and to the OP to CEDAW, and new training materials and methodologies that can contribute to building capacity on CEDAW, the OP to CEDAW and women's human rights in general;
- * The mobilisation of women at the local and global level to bring about democratization, respect for human rights and social transformation that recognizes the full equality of women.

In 2008, IWRAP Asia Pacific continued to focus on building the capacity of women's groups to hold their states and the international community accountable for the promotion and protection of women's human rights, with a special focus on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The From Global to Local project brought women from 28 countries to the CEDAW review sessions, expanding our network of contacts worldwide and enriching the relationship between the organization and the OHCHR as well as the CEDAW Committee.

The meetings on Concluding Observations in Delhi and in Cape Town created a very significant and dynamic link with women's groups working for CEDAW implementation at the national level in the south Asian and African regions. Following these Consultations, several national groups have taken forward the work on holding their governments to account for the implementation of the Concluding Observations.

Strategizing on bringing cases to the CEDAW Committee under the OP has enhanced our own understanding of the mechanism, and allows for stronger links with national partners. Our advocacy work on the OP to CEDAW has also led to an extremely constructive collaboration with the Karat Coalition and groups in Central and Eastern Europe. Initial discussions with members of the CEDAW Committee regarding obstacles faced by women

when trying to access the OP have led to a potential meeting with the Committee on this theme in 2009.

The work at the Human Rights Council and in particular around the process of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has played a key role in encouraging the engagement of IRAW Asia Pacific's partners with human rights arenas and mechanisms outside CEDAW. This process has strengthened critical partnerships with mainstream human rights groups, and contributed to the advocacy for better and wider integration of women's rights concerns into the on-going work of the UN HR Council. The recognition of the expertise and substantive contribution IRAW Asia Pacific brings to the mainstream human rights discourse remains a major factor that enhances our capacity to build alliances with women's groups, other human rights groups, states and the UN agencies working on women's human rights. The adoption of the OP to the ICESCR has opened up the door to a new phase of campaigning for ratification and use of the new mechanism, and of strengthening a focus on women's rights within the ESCR framework. Again, the expertise of IRAW Asia Pacific on the OP to CEDAW has informed and enriched the activism of our partners and allies and strengthened our own position within networks working on economic, social and cultural rights. Potential work around the proposed ASEAN human rights mechanism will also create more avenues for the organization to take its work forward.

The advocacy programme and the From Global to Local project in particular, developed a special focus on women from communities that face marginalization and discrimination due to their identity or minority status. Among these communities were ethnic minority and indigenous women in southeast Asia, Dalit women in south Asia, Roma women and migrant women in Europe and women facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression globally. This has opened up space for dialogue with the CEDAW Committee on these themes. It has also created new links with organizations working in these areas. Links have been established with the Sexual Rights Initiative, COC Netherlands and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) on sexual rights advocacy. Existing relationships with the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) and the Women's international League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) have expanded to include collaboration on bringing issues of women affected by conflict to the notice of the CEDAW Committee.

The training tools developed by IRAW Asia Pacific were continually reviewed during the various training programmes carried out by IRAW Asia Pacific and its partners over the year. Recommendations for updating and expanding the materials to reflect developments in women's human rights at both the conceptual and structural levels have been taken on board and the training materials used by the From Global to Local project as well as the main Training Manual of IRAW Asia Pacific are being added to and changed as a result. The Expert Group Meeting on Creating Resources for Lawyers on Litigation for Women's Human Rights Using CEDAW will initiate a process of working on a resource package for lawyers. Experiences on applying the CEDAW Application of CEDAW Framework developed by IRAW Asia Pacific over the years have led to more focus on developing more creative and interactive methodologies for the framework.

2008 saw a process of consultation with partners in south and south east Asia, the regions where IRAW Asia Pacific has worked most consistently over the past years through country visits. This has enabled us to assess the effectiveness of our work and gather information on the on-going work of partner organizations in relation to CEDAW and to the OP to CEDAW. Keeping in touch with the people we have trained through the regional Training of Trainers programmes has been identified as a challenge, since they are scattered through the region and are also engaged in their own work within their organizations. Other areas of focus for the future will be expanding the pool of resource persons, creating spaces and opportunities for senior trainers to mentor new trainers and developing methods of staying in regular contact with the training pool as a whole. Strengthening our links with women's rights groups in east Asia and in the Pacific region is a further area for expansion.

The constant pressure from participants in the From Global to Local project as well as from other women's rights organizations to extend support to organizations located outside the Asia Pacific region remains a major challenge. In 2008, the Capacity Building Programme received requests for training from groups in Uzbekistan, Lebanon, Poland and Eastern Europe. Some relationships that have been explored have had very positive results, for example, with the Karat Coalition. Others have not been so satisfying. Analysing these exploratory initiatives is imperative if we are to respond to the needs of our partners as well ensure maximum utilisation of resources.

The IDEAS programme of IRAW Asia Pacific has established itself as a credible and efficient resource base on CEDAW and related women's human rights themes. With the revamped website in place, the services offered to users of the website will be enhanced. IRAW Asia Pacific also continues to be an organization that consistently produces well-researched and substantiated material on CEDAW, the OP to CEDAW and on the challenges of using CEDAW to promote and protect women's human rights.

Strengthening the institutional and governance structures of IRAW Asia Pacific, enriching the harmony between the goals of the organization and the objectives of each programme and activity and enhancing the synergy between the various programmes of IRAW Asia Pacific remain constant challenges. Through 2008, IRAW Asia Pacific has sustained the interest and commitment of a core group of Board members and Advisors as well as resource persons, which is a reflection of the high quality of work carried out by the organization as well as of the inspirational role it plays in the field of women's human rights work in general and in CEDAW-related work in particular. The financial management of the organization as well as the fulfilling of obligations to donors is regular and of high calibre and the fact that many donors continue to support the work is an indication of their confidence in the organization's programmatic and administrative capabilities.

In 2008, we have retained a core team of programme staff as well as the staff in the finance and administrative section. The recruitment of the new Executive Director and of administrative assistants has brought in additional human resources, and the transitioning out of Ms. Bee Yee Yew, the Deputy Executive Director, was carried out smoothly.

Some challenges confronted by the organization in 2008 are due to external factors such as the economic crisis and the growing impact of religious fundamentalism and ultra nationalism in diverse forms on women's capacity to enjoy and exercise their rights. The global financial crisis has affected the donor community quite intensely, the private foundations as well as the bilateral donors. This will undoubtedly pose a challenge for fund-raising in the coming years, especially in 2009 and 2010. Fundamentalist and extremist groups promote an ideology and behaviour that restrict women's mobility and capacity to engage in advocacy at the national level for changes in laws, policies and programmes to serve the interests of women better. They also result in rejection of advocacy for women's equality as being impositions of hostile and 'outsider' cultures. The violence that accompanies these trends threatens the work of women's human rights organizations, and we have had participants in the From Global to Local project for example, who have preferred not to play a visible role at the review sessions out of fears for their own security.

At the internal level, IWRAW Asia Pacific needs to strengthen its own expertise and knowledge on areas of work that are opening up as we work with partners and categories of women that are relatively new to us. Identifying suitable new programme staff who are capable of enriching the organization with skills and expertise that is required for working in the new geographic and substantive areas as well as identifying potential resource persons and persons with technical skills in writing, translating and editing is a critical arena in which IWRAW Asia Pacific has to move forward in the coming year or two.

The advisors to IWRAW Asia Pacific at the level of the Advisory Committee and the Advisory Groups are all experts who give of their valuable time and expertise to enrich the organization. In terms of the substantive work of IWRAW Asia Pacific, new mechanisms for regular consultation between the staff and the advisory bodies must be developed in order to strengthen the role of the Advisory Groups and of the Advisory Committee and ensure systematic feedback regarding on going programmes and activities. The future expansion and growth of IWRAW Asia Pacific also calls for updating existing systems relating to the governance structures of the organization in order to allow more sustainable processes to bring new faces on board while retaining the wisdom of the existing members.

The confidence reposed in IWRAW Asia Pacific by women's groups around the world, as well as by the OHCHR and the CEDAW Committee is a critical feature that strengthens the work and reputation of the organization. The skills, expertise and experience of the staff, the mechanisms in place that allow for the organization to draw on the knowledge and experiences of previous staff members and the skills and capacities of partners on the ground that have been developed by IWRAW Asia Pacific over the past fifteen years all provide a resource base that is invaluable for the work of the organization in the future.

BACKGROUND

International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific is an international organisation based in Malaysia, working with women's rights organizations nationally, regionally and internationally to advance the protection and promotion of women's human rights. It bridges the gap between the promise of women's human rights as embodied in international human rights law, and the actual realisation of these rights for women at the national and local level. It does this by raising awareness of rights, especially those articulated in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and by mobilising women's groups at all levels to draw accountability from governments for the full implementation of CEDAW and for the full realization of women's rights.

When it was first established in 1993, IWRAP Asia Pacific focused on 12 countries in South and Southeast Asia. Today, our reach has expanded in a sustained manner to 15 countries in South and Southeast Asia and we have facilitated the advocacy of women's groups in over 117 countries globally.

CONCEPTUAL PREMISE

The work of IWRAP Asia Pacific is premised on the belief that discrimination is at the root of all forms of deprivation and denial of rights, and that all rights are interrelated. IWRAP Asia Pacific recognizes that discrimination against women is fundamental to marginalization and exclusion of women from all decision-making whether at the family and community level or in the international arena. Therefore, the programmes of IWRAP Asia Pacific aim to enhance women's control over processes through which they can articulate and claim their rights and builds capacity for advocacy for the promotion and protection of rights. This entails the promotion of substantive equality in every sphere of women's lives, and for all sectors of the world's women. This focus on discrimination and

equality enables IWRAP Asia Pacific to work with other human rights organizations and social justice movements to eliminate all forms of discrimination against all sectors of the world's peoples and at every level. IWRAP Asia Pacific is committed to the idea that a rights framework does not automatically confer rights. Rather, it legitimises claims for rights, and imposes obligations on states and public institutions at every level to protect, promote and fulfil all human rights for all. It is the task of IWRAP Asia Pacific and other similar organizations to raise awareness and mobilise activism to ensure that these obligations are fulfilled.

Why work with treaties?

Consistent work with treaties ensures State accountability for taking specific actions to realise the human rights of women according to an expanding set of principles, standards and substantive commitments.

Focus on CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Convention) mandates substantive equality and gender responsive policies and programmes that are premised on a human rights perspective. The strength of the CEDAW Convention is that it recognises the systemic nature of the oppression of women and extends protection to all groups of women in all contexts.

IWRAW Asia Pacific focuses on the promotion of women's rights based on its understanding of the specific, historical and systemic nature of discrimination against women, as compared to men. As a strategy to achieve its aim of promoting the human rights of women, the organisation has chosen to facilitate the development of synergy between the application of international human rights standards at the domestic level and the transmitting of these experiences to standard-setting arenas at the regional and global level. This is done through facilitating the monitoring and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other human rights treaties. IWRAW Asia Pacific sees this approach as addressing the conditions that contribute to discrimination against women while at the same time ensuring that the specificities of women's experiences inform the appropriate reform of laws and policies.

IWRAW Asia Pacific's programme is premised on the belief that, in order for women to access 'real' or substantive equality, several conditions must be fulfilled:

- Standard-setting at the international level must correspond to the needs of women at the local level;
- There must be a global culture of compliance with gender sensitive human rights;
- Women's ability to claim their rights must be affirmed through law and policy;
- Women must be organized and conscious of their rights to be advocates on their own behalf; they must be able to form a constituency with a strong voice to invoke their rights and push for political action and social transformation;
- The institutional and administrative structures that can put these changes in place such as the judiciary, the bureaucracy and decision-makers including parliamentarians must be gender-sensitised;
- Mechanisms for enforcement must be gender-sensitive and have the will to implement the CEDAW Convention;
- Mechanisms for monitoring the fulfilment of State obligations under the CEDAW Convention must be put in place in order to track progress in making equality a reality for women at the domestic level.

VISION AND MISSION

IWRAW Asia Pacific envisions a world where there is full realisation and enjoyment of human rights by all. Women's equality is integral to this achievement. We are committed to playing a role in processes of social transformation that can guarantee full and substantive equality for women, while building a culture of respect for human rights principles and for the rights and dignity of all the worlds' peoples.

The mission of IWRAW Asia Pacific is to act as a catalyst in building capacity for change and in enhancing the realisation of the human rights of women through:

- Engaging in advocacy on women's human rights, including in collaboration with other groups and movements;

- Sharpening understanding of human rights principles, especially of equality and non-discrimination, from a gender-sensitive perspective and with a focus on CEDAW;
- Enhancing skills and expertise for the application of CEDAW principles in varied and emerging contexts;
- Building greater capacity within women's groups for monitoring the application and implementation of CEDAW principles at the local and national levels;
- Ensuring the inclusion of women in standard-setting processes and in the formulation of policies and laws at the national and international levels;
- Developing new knowledge and methodologies that can provide strategic support for groups working on the advancement of women's human rights;
- Mobilising women to bring about good governance and sustainable change using a gender-sensitive and rights-based approach;
- Providing support for women who are engaged in defending their rights and the rights of their communities;

IWRAW Asia Pacific works through collaborative projects with women activists and NGOs at all levels, recognising that the effective participation of women is essential for comprehensive monitoring and fulfilment of the rights guaranteed in CEDAW and other international human rights treaties.

PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Phase I: 1993-1996

During this period, the focus was on strengthening national women's groups and alliances in South and Southeast Asia to sustain CEDAW-related work in their countries. Creating conceptual clarity pertaining to women's rights, including on substantive equality and discrimination, and encouraging women's groups in the region to coordinate their advocacy within a rights framework were the objectives of IWRAW Asia Pacific programmes in this phase.

Phase II: 1997-2002

In this phase, IWRAW Asia Pacific focused more on developing specific frameworks and methodologies for working more deeply on CEDAW. Among the achievements is the development of a CEDAW Monitoring tool and the establishment of CEDAW monitoring networks in 12 countries in South and Southeast Asia, as part of a project known as "Facilitating the Fulfillment of State Obligations to Women's Equality". This led to the development of a five module training package that focuses on the CEDAW Convention and facilitates an understanding of the Convention both substantively and procedurally. This period also saw the creation of the From Global to Local programme, and support by IWRAW Asia Pacific to increased participation of women's groups in South and Southeast Asia in regional and international advocacy on CEDAW. IWRAW Asia Pacific also participated in the process of creating an Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention, spearheading the global campaign on the ratification and use of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, the "Our

Rights are Not Optional” campaign. The work of IWRAW Asia Pacific influenced changes in laws and policies in countries such as India, Malaysia, Nepal and Pakistan, including landmark court decisions on inheritance rights in Nepal and reforms of property ownership laws in India.

Phase III: 2003-2005

In this phase, IWRAW Asia Pacific worked on enhancing the capability of women’s groups to introduce a *rights-based perspective* in the demands they are making of the State and to combine national level activism with international activism. Participating in discussions on the proposed reforms of the UN human rights system, including participation in the annual meeting of the Chairpersons of the treaty bodies and the Inter-Committee meeting, developing capability to provide technical assistance to governments on CEDAW implementation, building capacity for litigation strategies as a means of strengthening domestic implementation of the CEDAW Convention and also as a means of strengthening the use of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW were among the new focus areas of the work of IWRAW Asia Pacific in this period.

Phase IV: 2006-2007

The organisation was faced with the challenge of contributing to the development of mechanisms such as the Optional Protocol (OP) to International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and to the work of UN reform including the reform of the Treaty Bodies, the Human Rights Council and the development of the new Gender Equality Architecture. There was a process of re-institutionalising partnerships with national groups in South and South East Asia, and development of a strategy for working with groups in the other geographic regions such as the Pacific and Central Asia. Among key activities in this period were: Convening an expert group meeting to develop conceptual clarity on the issue of state obligation under the Convention; Convening a writer’s workshop to develop a publication that would capture existing knowledge on the innovative ways that activists and NGOs have been able to use the Convention for law reform, litigation or institutional reform; Developing a tool for monitoring the application of CEDAW in laws, policies and programmes; Facilitating the contribution of information on women’s rights human situations to the Universal Periodic Review process

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS: 2008

The realization of equal rights for women remains an unfinished agenda of the 21st century. Many advances have been made regarding women's equality in legal and policy arenas. Yet, discrimination and violence against women continue to persist, especially within the family and in the community. The growing role of non-state actors, who primarily operate outside existing legal and institutional frameworks, in affirming and perpetuating discrimination and subordination of women is a phenomenon that blocks women's advancement and renders them vulnerable to violence of all forms. The task of dismantling the social and cultural frameworks based on patriarchal notions of tradition and custom that justify and perpetuate the subordinate status of women poses a continuous challenge to advocacy for women's rights. The present global financial and environmental crises as well as the spread of identity-based politics have led to the erosion of rights and freedoms justified on the basis of national security, the global war against terror and state sovereignty, and also play a critical role in perpetuating discrimination and violence against women.

In such an environment, supporting and facilitating the promotion and protection of women's rights and enabling women to access all available mechanisms for justice and redress becomes a critical area of action and activism for women's human rights.

In addition, since the definition and interpretation of rights is an area that is constantly being expanded and refined, it is imperative to train and enable women's rights activists to become and remain a part of standard-setting processes at every level, national and global, making conceptual and substantive interventions that institutionalise a focus on women's human rights within whatever area of rights is under discussion.

NEW DIRECTIONS OF OUR WORK

In 2008, IRAW Asia Pacific's mission and long-term objectives were refined and refocused through a process of strategic planning begun in mid-2007 up to early 2008 through various internal meetings and meetings with our advisory groups, including our main governance body, the Advisory Committee.

Bearing our past activities, achievements and the present challenges to women's human rights in mind, in the 2008-2012, IRAW Asia Pacific seeks to focus on:

1. *Consolidating the gains of our existing work whereby we aim to:*
 - Contribute to creating spaces for national level groups to work towards the implementation of CEDAW nationally;
 - Implement a more strategic information dissemination programme
 - Promote non-discrimination and equality at all levels of government action towards the crafting and effective implementation of laws, policies, and programmes;
 - Build capacity for litigation and use of OP-CEDAW;
 - Enhance and expand areas of international advocacy to integrate women's perspectives of equality and non-discrimination into the work of other human rights treaty bodies, human rights mechanisms and procedures, and into work on other areas and sectors of human rights;
 - Engage with the processes of UN reform in order to ensure integration of a women's rights perspectives in all arenas;
 - Participate in expanding interpretation of standards of equality and non-discrimination at the international level by contributing to the drafting of general recommendations to CEDAW on Article 2;
 - Input into the drafting, adoption and ratification and use of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).
2. *Expanding our work to include:*
 - strengthening regional and national strategies located in women's realities in South and Southeast Asia;
 - facilitating the creation of regional strategies for other regions including the Pacific, East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Central Asia and Eastern Europe;
 - exploring the possibilities for outreach and partnerships in southern Africa, and in the Caribbean and Latin America;
 - Working to build capacity with new groups:
 - *National Human Rights Institutions:* building capacity of NHRIs to engage in the CEDAW review process including monitoring state compliance and reporting to the CEDAW committee;
 - *Mainstream Human Rights Organisations:* building capacity of mainstream human rights organizations to incorporate a women's human rights perspective into their work.

3. *New dimensions of our work:*

- exploring new ways of using the CEDAW framework to address impunity and violence against women; rights of migrating women and trafficked women; rights of women affected by conflict; reproductive rights; sexuality rights; and women's economic rights

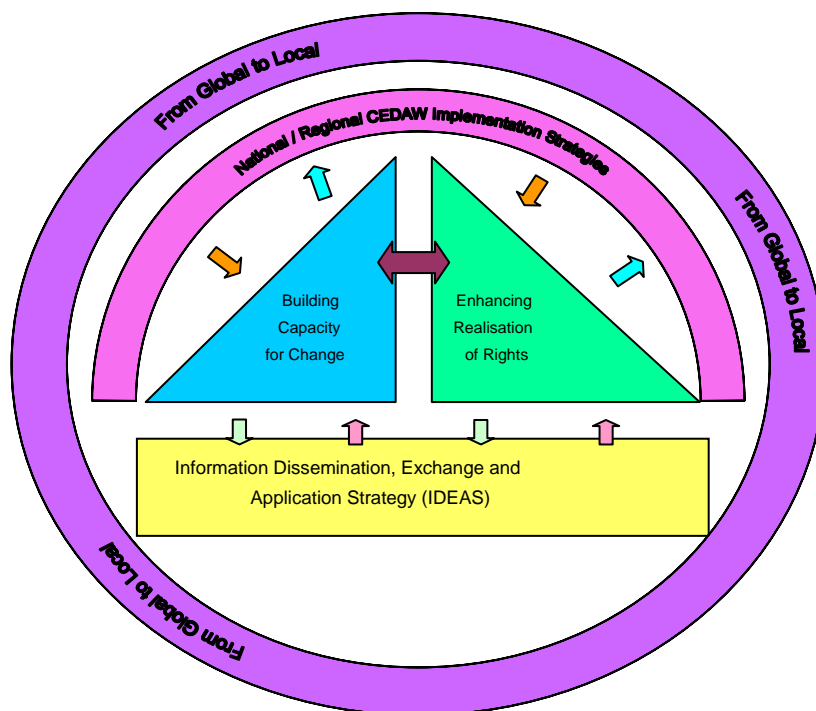
Women's NGOs continue to be our primary partners, while at the same time we work with human rights defenders, lawyers and judges, members of political and administrative structures such as bureaucrats, Parliamentarians, members of local government bodies and members of NHRIs, as well as with international human rights organisations and social justice movements. IWRAW Asia Pacific recognises that the mobilisation, advocacy, and participation of women at all levels are essential for the effective monitoring and fulfilment of the rights ensured in CEDAW and other international human rights treaties. We work through collaborative projects with women activists and NGOs at the national and local levels.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION 2008

IWRAW Asia Pacific's mission continues to be implemented through strategic and inter-related programmes. At the core are two interrelated strategies – the Building Capacity for Change Programme and the Enhancing Realisation of Rights Programme, in turn supported by two foundational strategies - the Information Dissemination, Exchange and Application Strategy and Institution Building Strategies of the organisation. The synergy of all the four strategies is clearly reflected in the two cross-strategy programmes of IWRAW Asia Pacific – Global to Local Programme, and the Building and Implementing Regional and National Strategies for Realization of Human Rights of Women.

The synergy between and inter-relatedness of IWRAW Asia Pacific's programmes is demonstrated in the diagram below.

Programme Synergies



Building Capacity for Change

I. Background

The Building Capacity for Change Programme (Capacity Building Programme) develops new ways of building the capacity of organizations and institutions at national, regional and international levels for advocacy and reform. IWRAW Asia Pacific finds itself in the unique position of being the only organisation dedicated to providing training on the principles and application of the CEDAW, adding value to the work of organisations through the application of the standards of equality and non-discrimination.

II. Aims and Objectives

The overall objective of the Capacity Building Programme is to develop skills in the application of international human rights law, especially on the principles of the CEDAW Convention. The specific aims are:

- To strengthen and expand the capacity of women's groups and networks to claim their human rights and to draw accountability from governments through national, regional and international mechanisms;
- To promote integration of the principles of non-discrimination and equality at all levels of government action towards the crafting and effective implementation of laws, policies, and programmes;
- To strengthen alliances and collaboration with mainstream human rights organisations, social movements and other key players to sharpen women's equality perspectives in their advocacy and strategies; and
- To develop tools, methodologies, resource materials, training frameworks and resource persons to facilitate the implementation of the Capacity Building Programme.

Focus of activities in 2008:

- Examining and refining the objectives and goals of the Capacity Building Programme, with assistance from the Capacity Building Advisory Group;
- Implementing and refining our programmes for building and implementing Regional and National Women's Human Rights Implementation Strategies for South and Southeast Asia;
- Developing training materials for lawyers' training; and
- Reviewing and updating existing training materials.

III. Implementation

A key part of the Capacity Building Programme is conducting training for women's groups and other stakeholders to build their capacity to advance women's human rights in their communities and countries. This is a pro-active strategy through which IRAW Asia Pacific identifies countries and regions requiring assistance and capacity building. It is also a responsive strategy, whereby we provide assistance in the form of trainings, resource persons, ideas, materials, etc. upon request.

IRAW Asia Pacific conducted a number of trainings throughout 2008. These trainings were either initiated by IRAW Asia Pacific directly, in response to recommendations emerging from processes of national and regional consultation or were the result of a request for training from our partner organisations. Capacity building was also conducted through our participation in the activities of other organizations. Increasingly, the trend is for national groups to request that IRAW Asia Pacific provide training and technical assistance or in other ways contribute substantively to their programmes. The core materials for the trainings are the two frameworks developed by IRAW Asia Pacific: the Monitoring and Application Frameworks.

In 2008, IRAW Asia Pacific conducted 14 workshops, sessions, and trainings ranging from meetings, multi-day trainings to sessions within conferences or workshops. Table 1 describes the types of trainings we conducted. Basic CEDAW is a generic category describing trainings which are capacity building (technical) sessions on CEDAW, while the other categories refer to trainings focused on specific purposes, e.g. trainings held to facilitate writing of NGO shadow reports or to facilitate the use of the international human rights system generally.

Table 1

Types of training held	Number of trainings held
Basic CEDAW (national) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National human rights institutions• Indigenous women• Refugee	6
Shadow/alternative report (national)	1
Contextual (national) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Application and Monitoring of CEDAW• Violence Against Women	2
Contextual (regional) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Optional Protocol to CEDAW• CEDAW Skill Building• Violence Against Women• Ethnic Minority and Indigenous Women• Implementation of Concluding Observations• CEDAW Application	6

Table 2: the general profile of our participants

Table 2

Training Statistics	
Profile of Participants	Number of Participants
Activists	331
Government officials	30
National Human Rights Institutions	57
Total	418

Building and Implementing Regional and National Women's Human Rights Implementation Strategies for South and Southeast Asia

Background

In 2007, IWRAW Asia Pacific assessed its work and relationship with partner organizations in South and Southeast Asia and determined it was time to renew contacts, establish new relationships and compile information on the status of CEDAW work in the regions. Two regional strategy meetings were held, the Southeast Asia Women's Human Rights Implementation Strategy Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia and South Asia Task Force for the Advancement of CEDAW meeting in Kathmandu, in order to devise strategies for the regions.

Because the women's organizations in South and Southeast Asia are at different stages in terms of knowledge and use of CEDAW in their work, the strategies for South and Southeast Asia are distinct. Many South Asian organizations use CEDAW as an overall framework that informs and guides their work. As a consequence of their high level of expertise, IWRAW Asia Pacific focuses on providing advanced level training or technical assistance and on facilitating regional processes for promoting strategies on issues affecting women throughout the region. With respect to Southeast Asia, the level of CEDAW expertise is more basic and therefore, our training seeks to build fundamental skills. In addition, the diversity in language, political traditions and culture in Southeast Asia presents complex challenges and IWRAW Asia Pacific has recently decided to focus on national (versus regional) training and use regional meetings for sharing experiences and best practices around specific issues and themes.

In late 2007 and early 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific continued to develop and began implementing its strategies for this region. Many of the activities undertaken in 2008 were a result of the discussions and priorities identified at the regional strategy meetings of 2007 and incorporated into the regional and national level strategies. These strategies also benefited from input from the Capacity Building Advisory Group, whose advice also impacted their implementation.

South Asia

In 2008, the implementation of its IRAW Asia Pacific's regional strategy for South Asia involved two primary activities: country visits to Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka and a regional meeting examining the implementation of the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee in South Asian countries.

The country visits to Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka aimed to fill the gaps in our information on the status of CEDAW implementation, stakeholders involved in the process, best practices, obstacles, challenges/gaps if any, as well as the most current needs and priorities identified by national organizations in those countries. The interviews and discussions with well established IRAW Asia Pacific partners as well as with new contacts resulted in recommendations on the role IRAW Asia Pacific can play to support these organizations, identifying specific national level needs and priorities, and also revealing a number of issues common to the region on which sub-regional and regional advocacy could be initiated.

The South Asia Regional Consultation on the Implementation of Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee (the Regional Consultation), was held from 22-25 May 2008 in New Delhi, India with the aim of building on the accomplishments and momentum of advocacy in the region around CEDAW and examining opportunities and obstacles to promoting State implementation of the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee.

This activity followed up on the work of national organizations through IRAW Asia Pacific's From Global to Local Programme, during which women's groups attended training conducted by IRAW Asia Pacific, in preparation for their state's review by the CEDAW Committee.

The objectives of the Regional Consultation were: (1) to share experiences, identify common obstacles, good practices and reflect on the follow up undertaken to further the implementation of concluding observations nationally; and (2) to develop national and cross-national strategies towards advocating for the implementation of concluding observations to meet the goal of enhancing the realisation of women's human rights and the full implementation of the CEDAW Convention.

The Regional Consultation brought together over 45 participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, including those who have attended the CEDAW review process, as well as a few representatives from Bar Councils and Associations and National Human Rights Institutions from the region.

The main outcome of the Regional Consultation was the development of national level strategies for taking forward the implementation of CEDAW concluding observations. In addition, through an in-depth reflection on the key cross-cutting themes in the region, participants came to consensus on several issues that could form the foundation for cross-national or regional strategies towards advocating for the implementation of concluding

observations, the realisation of women's human rights and full implementation of CEDAW in the region.

Southeast Asia

In 2008, IRAW Asia Pacific organized a series of meetings and consultations in Southeast Asia. Most of them were designed as responses to some of the recommendations that emerged out of the *Consultation on Women's Human Rights Implementation Strategies* held in Jakarta in September 2007. The recommendations from these interactions with partners will feed into the process of refining the strategies that IRAW Asia Pacific will implement in the region in the future.

Among the activities were:

May: Partnered with the Women's Legal Bureau of the Philippines to conduct the Southeast Asia Optional Protocol to CEDAW Training in Bangkok for 28 participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, Singapore and Vietnam, as a follow up on requests received at the meeting in Jakarta in 2007.

July: Organized the Southeast Asia Skill Building Training in the Context of CEDAW in Hanoi, Vietnam, for 31 representatives of national partners from Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam in response to a need identified during the meeting in Jakarta in 2007. The training aimed at enhancing capacity for the application and implementation of CEDAW in Southeast Asia in varied and emerging contexts.

October: Organized a meeting on the Application of CEDAW Framework to Address Impunity in the Context of Violence against Women for 32 women activists from Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam in Kuala Lumpur. This meeting was a follow up to requests from participants at the meeting in Jakarta in 2007 in which violence against women had been identified as a priority concern on which further training was required.

The meeting presented the concept of impunity as developed within the human rights framework and engaged in an exploration of the potential for using the concept to address the difficulties faced by women activists who seek to bring perpetrators of violence against women to account for their actions in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings.

The objectives of the meeting included:

- Building conceptual understanding of the framework of impunity including the United Nations' Updated Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity (February 2005);
- Exploring the usefulness of impunity as a tool to address issues of lack of justice and redress for women victims and survivors of violence against women;
- Exploring concepts of truth, justice, transitional justice and reparation in the context of VAW;

- Developing national strategies using a rights-based approach to address impunity in the context of VAW taking into account national and regional experiences and international human rights standards; and
- Strengthening the regional processes and constituencies addressing VAW as a violation of women's human rights.

Organized a training for GenComNet, Vietnam, to enhance skills on monitoring the implementation of laws and policies for women. The training focused on monitoring and also outlined guidelines to evaluate, plan and implement laws, policies and programmes utilizing CEDAW principles. 28 participants from both NGOs and government attended the training.

Outside the Asia Pacific Region

June: Collaborated with International General Policy Network (IGPN)¹ to organize a training on CEDAW that sought to enhance the understanding of key concepts and principles pertaining to women's rights provided for in CEDAW (including equality, non-discrimination as well as state obligations under treaty law) , among participants, increase knowledge of the elements of a framework that can be used to bring about CEDAW compliance in law and programmes, and shared additional knowledge and skills in the application of CEDAW for the promotion and fulfilment of women's right to equality. 25 women from 21 countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe attended the training.

National

In the first quarter of 2008, representatives of IRAW Asia Pacific carried out country visits to **Bangladesh, India** and **Sri Lanka**, seeking up to date information on the priorities and needs of women's rights organizations there. Recommendations emerged about several areas in which IRAW Asia Pacific can lead regional initiatives to address issues affecting several countries, such as women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In **March** IRAW Asia Pacific was involved in a workshop organised by Tenaganita on enhancing support mechanisms for survivors of gender-based violence within the Burmese refugee community in Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia**.

In **April**, IRAW Asia Pacific worked with STEPS Towards Development on an alternative report writing workshop held in Dhaka, **Bangladesh**. The purpose of the meeting/training was to assess the work of the Citizen's Initiative on CEDAW, Bangladesh on drafting the Alternative Report to CEDAW and to build the capacity of the writers of the Alternative Report. 30 representatives from women's organizations in Bangladesh attended the training.

¹ IGPN is a membership based, non-governmental organization established in 2005 with the goal of strengthening and fostering the impact of policy work of the women's movement and to ensure the sustainability of women's movements in the Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

In **May**, the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) Institute for the Empowerment of Women and Women's Development Research Centre in **Malaysia** organised a training on violence against women (VAW) for 25 – 30 government representatives from NAM countries from 5 – 16 May 2009, in which IWRAW Asia Pacific participated.

In **July**, IWRAW Asia Pacific, in collaboration with Hama Jamiya in **the Maldives**, conducted three-day training for nine lawyers, government officials and academics. The training included providing an introduction to international human rights system, including the key concepts of state obligation, universality, interdependence of rights and the principle of non-derogation. It also introduced participants to the concepts of sex and gender, an overview of CEDAW and strategies for using CEDAW to advance women's human rights. The training was designed to increase the number of lawyers in the Maldives familiar with CEDAW, and to encourage advocacy around the OP-CEDAW.

In **July**, IWRAW Asia Pacific also responded to a request for support from Hama Jamiyya in gathering information on a case of incest in **the Maldives**, which potential could form the basis for a case under the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. One of the obstacles faced in dealing with this case and similar situations was justification by the community that the cultural practices of the area condoned the actions of the father and supported his rights over his child. There was a discussion as to how to strategise on the issue and a visit was made to the community. Following the interviews, the team decided not to pursue any action, as the survivor herself was unwilling to seek a remedy.

In **September**, the All Women's Action Society Malaysia (AWAM) organized one-day training for 20 members, staff and volunteers, on Feminism, Rights and CEDAW. The training, which was held in Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia**, examined the human rights-based approach to promoting women's rights, the international human rights system, the advantages of using international human rights to address violence against women, the key features of CEDAW and methods for implementing CEDAW.

Work with National Human Rights Institutions

In **January**, IWRAW Asia Pacific organized a training on "Realising Human Rights of Women: CEDAW Convention in Action" for the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice, in Dili, **Timor Leste**. The training aimed at strengthening the capacity of that Office to integrate the principles of CEDAW and its Optional Protocol into its programmes, practices and services. Approximately 25-32 participants from the Ombudsman's Office and representatives from the Human Rights Monitoring Network, a partner of the Ombudsman's Office, attended the training.

February: IWRAW Asia Pacific participated in a meeting, organised by the Human Rights Education and Promotion Working Group, of SUHAKAM, **Malaysia**, to strategize on SUHAKAM's proposed programme on "Creating Public Awareness on CEDAW", along with SUHAKAM staff, representatives from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and representatives from national women's groups. The discussions focused on the formation of a training committee to identify target groups, create a pool of trainers

and develop materials. There was a follow up meeting in **March** to finalize the arrangements for training SUHAKAM staff on its role in its education strategy on CEDAW.

In **April**, IRAW Asia Pacific was involved in the CEDAW Orientation Workshop, organized by SUHAKAM, **Malaysia**, aimed at providing an introduction to CEDAW to SUHAKAM staff. Approximately 25 SUHAKAM staff and volunteers were given an overview of the women's human rights framework, key features and principles of CEDAW, the reporting process and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. The participants were also exposed to basic skills on CEDAW application within the contexts of their job functions.

Work with Indigenous communities

In **January**, IRAW Asia Pacific participated in a consciousness-raising programme conducted by the Centre of Independent Journalism (CIJ), a non-profit media organisation, which empowers communities to claim and protect their information and communication rights. The programme was for 30 women from the Mah Meri indigenous community at Kampung Sungai Judah, Pulau Carey, **Malaysia**, and the intervention by IRAW Asia Pacific focused on health and reproductive rights within the CEDAW framework.

In **May**, IRAW Asia Pacific collaborated in a training and strategic planning workshop organized by the Asian Forum on Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and the Asian Indigenous Women's Network (AIWN), in Bangkok, **Thailand**, in collaboration with the UNIFEM CEDAW Southeast Asia Programme. The focus was on monitoring the implementation of the CEDAW for ethnic minority and indigenous women in the Southeast Asian region. The workshop brought together about 21–25 participants from ethnic minority and indigenous women's organizations from or those working with minority or indigenous communities in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam, to share their experiences and explore ways to strengthen their capacity to further carry out their advocacy work using CEDAW.

IV. Strategic Meetings

In **February**, IRAW Asia Pacific representatives met with Usa Lerdsrisuntad, of the **Foundation for Women, Bangkok, Thailand** to strengthen alliances developed at the Southeast Asia Women's Human Rights Implementation Strategies Meeting in Jakarta in September 2007 and explore further engagement with the Foundation for Women and other women's groups in Thailand.

Among the items discussed were (1) initiating a data gathering process by the working group on trafficking and migration formed during the September 2007 Jakarta meeting; (2) a regional consultation, possibly in collaboration with the Migrant Forum Asia and the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; (3) awareness and capacity building on the use of the OP-CEDAW (4) updating on the ASEAN Charter; (5) supporting the Women's Network for Progress and Peace, which is gathering disaggregated data from the Southern Thailand Province for purposes of preparing a Shadow Report; (6) linking the Network of Tribal Women to the NGO process on the Durban Review Conference 2009, initiated by Forum

Asia; and (7) inviting women's groups from Thailand to IWRAW Asia Pacific's Southeast Asia Skills Building Training (July 2008) and Application of CEDAW Consultation on Violence Against Women (October/November 2008).

In **June**, our participation in the Women's Assembly on Peasant Rights and the International Conference on Peasant Rights, both organized by **La Via Campesina** which is an international network of rural and peasant women, provided us with the opportunity to get to know this network, and also to consider strategies for engaging with groups that pursue advocacy on broader human rights issues without a particular focus on women's human rights.

Also in **June**, IWRAW Asia Pacific met with **Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**, to strategise on possible training activities in Malaysia. During the meetings, both WAO and IWRAW Asia Pacific shared their respective plans for the year.

In **April**, IWRAW Asia Pacific held a consultation with **UNIFEM Pacific** to provide inputs for the development of the next phase of its CEDAW Programme in the Pacific. IWRAW Asia Pacific helped in the development of a framework for CEDAW ratification and implementation in Pacific Island countries. The framework will also assist UNIFEM in planning activities to build the capacity of women's rights organisations in the Pacific. The meeting provided an opportunity for IWRAW Asia Pacific to learn about the current status of CEDAW implementation in Pacific Island countries. In 2009, IWRAW Asia Pacific will explore opportunities for engaging with women's organizations on CEDAW implementation, in consultation with existing partners and contacts in the Pacific region.

V. Sustaining and Expanding a Pool of Resource Persons

In 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific conducted a seven-day Regional Training of Trainers, for 26 participants from Australia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Cambodia, Nepal, Philippines, Jordan, Mongolia, Tibet, and Kyrgyzstan. Participants gained an understanding of the contexts of women's human rights; the systemic nature of discrimination; the law and its potential to empower women; the international human rights system, including its monitoring frameworks, treaties and treaty bodies, reporting processes and special procedures; the theoretical framework behind CEDAW and its basic principles and procedures; and how CEDAW can be applied in the local context through a rights-based approach.

A list of IWRAW Asia Pacific resource persons in 2008 is available in Annex 1.

VI. Training Materials

Annotated Framework for the Application of CEDAW

The CEDAW Application Framework developed in 2007 to review and reform laws, policies and programmes has been annotated, and this version will serve as the basis for the

development of new training materials, including training methodology, on using the Application of CEDAW Framework.

Building Capacity for Change: A Training Manual on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The 2008 RTOT expanded the primary training materials, the “Building Capacity for Change: A Training Manual on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” by adding new sessions and supplementing existing sessions to reflect emerging developments in the conceptual areas of heteronormativity, intersectionality, universality and gender, as well as recent reforms at the United Nations. These new sessions will be further developed in the coming years.

Lawyers’ Training Package

The idea for a lawyers’ training package arose out of the South Asia Litigation Initiative, which aimed to increase the capacity of lawyers to prepare and successfully bring cases on women’s equality and non-discrimination under the OP-CEDAW, as well as in domestic courts.

In December, 2008, IRAW Asia Pacific organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Creating Resources for Lawyers on Litigation for Women’s Human Rights Using CEDAW. The EGM provided IRAW Asia Pacific with the opportunity to examine the existing resources in the region for training lawyers and to explore the development of a comprehensive training package for the use of lawyers engaged in litigation in defence of women’s rights, including the preparation of briefing papers on discrete topics. Further work on this initiative will be undertaken in 2009.

VII. Capacity Building Advisory Group

The Capacity Building Programme is supported by the Capacity Building Advisory Group², which has the mandate to provide guidance and overall direction for the Capacity Building Programme. During a two-day meeting in March 2008, members of the Advisory Group and staff re-examined the objectives of the Capacity Building Programme and developed priority areas for 2008-2010 and areas of focus for 2008, reviewed the regional and national strategies for South and Southeast Asia and examined activities planned for 2008.

VIII. Networking

Other Arenas of Engagement

In April, two representatives of IRAW Asia Pacific attended a **Regional Planning Meeting on the ICPD +15, organized by ARROW** (Asia Pacific Resource and Research Centre for

² Shireen Huq, Eleanor Conda, Maria Graterol, Shanthi Dairiam, Madhu Mehra

Women) in Port Dickson, Malaysia attended by ARROW partners from Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Laos, Philippines, Cambodia and China. Audrey Lee from IWRAW Asia Pacific made a presentation on the “Linkages between ICPD and CEDAW” and shared the Application of CEDAW framework as a tool to sharpen advocacy activities and to think about research and monitoring projects on SRHR. There was a discussion on how to operationalise CEDAW into advocacy and activities based on a strong research/monitoring base.

In June, the **Asia Cause Lawyers Network** held a training for lawyers and activist practitioners called “Negotiating Equality through the Law” in Katmandu, Nepal, aimed at strengthening the capacity of lawyers, legal academicians and activists in using legal strategies to promote, protect and fulfill women’s human rights, sustain long term action for law reform and encourage a new generation of cause lawyers in the Asian region.

VIV. Assessment of Our Work

Fulfilling our core objectives

Many of the activities in 2008 directly contributed to the overall objectives of the Capacity Building Programme, including building capacity of women’s groups for claiming human rights, building alliances with mainstream human rights organizations and social movements, developing new training tools and expanding the pool of resource persons.

Our numerous training and technical assistance activities enhanced the ability of the partners who participated in those activities to continue their work on CEDAW and the realization of women’s human rights.

The training for ethnic minority and indigenous women from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam and for the Mah Meri women in Malaysia enabled IWRAW Asia Pacific to build links with groups and networks working in this sector. Our participation in the Women’s Assembly and the International Conference on Peasant Rights, organized by La Via Campesina presented us with the challenge of collaboration with mainstream groups that pursue advocacy on broader human rights issues without a particular focus on women’s human rights.

With regard to our training tools, the RTOT provided an opportunity to begin the process of expanding and updating our basic training manual to reflect developments in feminist theory and changes within the United Nations system. The Annotated Framework for the Application of CEDAW is the first step in developing a methodology and training materials for teaching the framework. The Expert Group Meeting on Creating Resources for Lawyers on Litigation for Women’s Human Rights Using CEDAW will result in the production of briefing papers for use in training lawyers on specific topics related to women’s human rights and CEDAW. These materials will allow us to further expand our training expertise to include specialized training for lawyers on using CEDAW at the national and international level. The materials will also provide us the opportunity to collaborate with new stakeholders who can advance legal strategies for the protection and promotion of women’s human rights.

Challenges

Southeast Asia

Three primary challenges to our work in building capacity in the region have been identified, through processes of evaluation and assessment of the various activities in the region in 2008. (1) the level of CEDAW background varies significantly within the region; (2) the cultural, political and language differences in the region call for different training approaches; (3) the lack of trainers in the Mekong region that can train on CEDAW in local languages. These factors make it clear that we should prioritise national level training in the Mekong region, identifying potential trainers who are proficient in English and can work in local languages. In addition, our training in Southeast Asia in 2008 on the Application of CEDAW Framework and the Monitoring Framework pointed to the need to develop better methodologies for basic training on the frameworks.

In 2009, IWRAW Asia Pacific is undertaking a series of country visits in Southeast Asia designed to assess the effectiveness of our work and gather information on the work of partner organizations on CEDAW in Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam, Laos and with Burmese women in exile. This information will be used to further refine our strategies for Southeast Asia. One proposal to address the challenges in training is to identify in each country several persons who have both strong English language skills and knowledge of CEDAW and provide comprehensive training to these persons. They would then serve as primary national level trainers. The country visit will assist us in identifying such persons.

South Asia

In terms of training on CEDAW in South Asia, national processes are well established and there is a solid foundation in terms of understanding and using CEDAW. The need to provide more advanced level training in South Asia will be addressed in 2009 by developing training methodologies for our Application of CEDAW Framework, which can be used to provide advanced CEDAW training.

Despite the high level of experience on CEDAW in South Asia, we still receive requests for basic CEDAW training. Given our limited resources, in 2009, we will be working on a strategy for prioritizing these requests and identifying existing resources in South Asia that can respond to the needs on which we are unable to provide assistance.

General

The Capacity Building Programme tends to rely on only a limited number of resource persons, leading to an over-dependence on certain people and underutilization of our other trainers. Keeping in touch with the people we have trained through the regional ToTs, for example, is also a challenge, since they are scattered through the region and are also engaged in their own work within their organizations. Expanding the pool of resource persons, creating spaces and opportunities for a senior trainer to mentor a new trainer and

developing methods of staying in regular contact with the training pool as a whole remain challenges for the future.

At our 2008 Advisory Committee meeting, our advisors recommended that we establish links with training institutions affiliated with universities, for example, as a way of maintaining continuity and ensuring a sustained relationship with the people we train. However, this has been impossible to accomplish so far, partly due to the specific nature of our training and our participants.

In 2009, we will also address the need for developing more interactive and creative methodologies for communicating the substance of the training frameworks developed by IWRAP Asia Pacific over the years, since this is a challenge that has been posed to us by participants in our trainings.

In 2008 we received a number of requests for training from groups outside of the Asia Pacific region. The volume of requests strains our available resources and points to the need to develop a strategy for extending the reach of our training programme without compromising our commitments to the Asia Pacific region. As a result, we must consider ways to prioritize regions and specific groups for outreach, guided by recommendations from the Capacity Building Advisory Group and the Advisory Committee.

Opportunities and Strengths

In 2008, the Capacity Building Programme received requests for training from groups outside the Asia Pacific region, in Uzbekistan, Lebanon, Poland and Eastern Europe (International Gender Policy Network). These organizations sought our assistance in conducting and planning training on CEDAW and on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. We held training in Istanbul for IGPN and the Karat Coalition in Poland in 2008. We are following up on the other requests in 2009.

The work with UNIFEM Pacific provided us with an opportunity to gather information on CEDAW implementation in the region, which we will use in considering how to pursue a regional strategy in the Pacific.

We also received requests to provide training to groups with whom we have not collaborated in the past, including indigenous, migrant and rural women. We have made a conscious effort to include women from these sectors in the From Global to Local Programme, as a part of our initiative to increase the number of women from minority groups that participate in their state's review by the CEDAW Committee. In addition, the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) approached us in 2008 to collaborate on a meeting in 2009 that will explore the use of CEDAW in the context of trafficking and migration.

These requests reflect a demand for our training expertise and represent opportunities for the Capacity Building Programme to expand its outreach to traditionally marginalized women's groups and to women working in other regions of the world. We will be exploring how to pursue these opportunities in the coming period.

Enhancing the Realisation of Rights

I. Background

The rationale of IWRAW Asia Pacific's work in international advocacy is to facilitate articulation and incorporation of national concerns in processes of international standard-setting. The Enhancing realization of Rights programme applies a synergetic approach to ensure that the international gains in terms of gender-sensitive and gender-specific human rights norms and standards are informed by, and therefore, reflective of realities of women's lives at the local and national level, and that these gains are able to support and strengthen the claims for realization of women's human rights.

Our international advocacy work links the rights claims made by women's rights activists in their local and national level advocacy with the international processes for monitoring fulfilment of women's human rights through the implementation of the CEDAW Convention and other international human rights treaties. Information provided by women's groups that would otherwise remain inaccessible at the UN and international level enhances the effectiveness of international standard setting. Simultaneously, the participation of women NGOs in human rights advocacy at the international level makes it possible for them to observe the processes of standard-setting and return to their own national and local contexts better equipped to convey this dynamic relationship to those who have remained at home.

II. Aims and Objectives

This strategy seeks to:

- Contribute to institutionalising women's human rights, creating a culture of respect for women's human rights and strengthening protection mechanisms nationally, regionally and internationally;
- Facilitate the claiming of rights by women at the national, regional and international level;
- Contribute to institutionalising women's human rights, strengthening protection mechanisms and facilitating the claiming of rights by women nationally, regionally and internationally;
- Ensure integration of substantive equality and non-discrimination as defined in the CEDAW Convention at all levels in the international human rights discourse and to enable its application at the national level.
- Engage with other human rights treaties and build synergies between CEDAW and particularly through the substantive engagement with the drafting of the OP to ICESCR and the promoting and building capacity of women's groups to use it;
- Consolidate and enhance our work under the From Global to Local Programme to bring about the more holistic and effective engagement with the CEDAW review process;

- Increase the ratification of the OP to CEDAW and use of the OP to CEDAW by women's groups to bring about substantive change to women's lives at the national level;
- Contribute towards a feminist engagement with the international human rights system at the international level to support the integration of women's human rights perspective into international mechanisms and procedures as well as to ensure the representation of women in these processes.

III. Implementation

In 2008, our international advocacy efforts focused on several different areas:

- Continued engagement with the CEDAW review process through the From Global to Local programme;
- Monitoring of the work of the UN Human Rights Council with regard to women's rights and CEDAW-related issues with a special focus on the Universal Periodic Review process as a new tool to bring visibility to women's human rights concerns;
- Monitoring the process of creating an ASEAN Human Rights Body;
- Engagement with the activities of the Asia Pacific Forum on National Human Rights Institutions;
- Involvement in the campaigns for the increased ratification and use of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (OP-CEDAW) and the campaign for the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the ICESCR (OP-ICESCR);
- Involvement with the discussions and advocacy around the creation of the UN gender entity (GEAR);
- Continued support for the work of the Special Rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, on Violence against Women and on Indigenous Rights; injecting their framework of analysis where possible with the normative standards of equality and non-discrimination found in CEDAW.

From Global to Local: A CEDAW Monitoring and Implementation Programme

The reporting process set up by the Convention creates an opportunity for women from ratifying countries to hold their states accountable for implementation of the principles and rights established by the Convention. The Concluding Observations issued by the Committee at the end of each state review also creates a space for women's groups to monitor the actions of their state with regard to their commitments and to report back to the Committee regarding achievements and failures. The From Global to Local programme of IWRAW Asia Pacific was created with the objective of enabling maximum participation of women from around the world in the reporting process. Up to date, this programme remains unique in its achievement of facilitating the participation of women from countries under review by the CEDAW Committee in the reporting process in a structured and systematic manner.

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Raise women's awareness on the significance of the CEDAW Convention;
- Familiarise women with the mechanisms set-up by the CEDAW Convention for monitoring its implementation;
- Promote the compilation, analysis and dissemination of alternative information on the status of women in countries reporting to the CEDAW Committee;
- Enable women from reporting countries to monitor their government's performance during the review of State party reports by CEDAW;
- Enable women from reporting countries to interact with CEDAW members in order to provide alternative information and raise pertinent issues, as well as to have a positive influence on the review; and
- Enable women to make plans for implementing the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and to collaborate with the government to implement the CEDAW Convention in their countries.

Activities in 2008

This is the **twelfth** successive year of the From Global to Local project, and as of November 2008, women's organizations from 124 countries have participated in the project.³

There were 3 CEDAW sessions in 2008. A mentoring programme was held for the 40th and 42nd CEDAW session and a full training programme for the 41st CEDAW session⁴.

2008 was the first time the CEDAW session was held in Geneva, at the Palais des Nations. The transfer of the secretariat of the CEDAW Committee from the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in New York to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva is part of the harmonisation of the work of the UN Treaty Bodies in the larger reform of the United Nations. In 2008, the Committee held 2 sessions in Geneva and 1 in New York.

CEDAW session	Reporting Countries	Programme
40 th session	8 countries	Mentoring
41 st session	8 countries	Training
42 nd session	12 countries	Mentoring

Before each CEDAW Committee session, IWRAW Asia Pacific actively seeks out and identifies the women's groups and networks in each country that are engaged in preparing for the CEDAW Review, and facilitates the preparation of the Shadow report, and the submission of this Report to the members of the Committee.

³ The structure of the Global to Local project is annexed as Annex 2.

⁴ The From Global to Local training and mentoring programme differ in that:

The training is run over 3 or 4 days with an extra day for discussions on follow up to the Concluding Observations for all NGOs whose country is reporting at that session. This means there is also more substantive input to the participants about the UN process and the principles of CEDAW, in addition to the practical tips on lobbying at the CEDAW session.

The mentoring is run over 2 days (as of January 2008) and is held over 2 weekends for NGOs from countries reporting in a particular week of the session. The content of the training is less in depth than that of the training as there is less time, and is focused only the practical side of lobbying at the CEDAW session.

During each session, the IRAW Asia Pacific team facilitates interaction between the women from the reporting countries who are following the mentoring/training and members of the Committee and with the OHCHR. Supporting the preparation of country briefings, thematic briefings and oral statements as well as providing guidance with regard to the logistics of arranging informal activities at the UN, the IRAW Asia Pacific team strives to enable the voices of women from all sectors in the reporting country to be heard and considered by the Committee.

The daily debriefings at the end of the day provide participants with a space to exchange ideas and experiences of the day, evaluate their work and performance, encourage each other, obtain further information and hints from the trainers, and promote solidarity and team work. At the end of the review process, participants create their own follow up plans to monitor the implementation of the Committee's Concluding Observations. IRAW Asia Pacific often provides support for these activities.

40th CEDAW session, 14 January – 1 February 2008, Geneva

Overview: At the 40th CEDAW session, the CEDAW Committee reviewed 8 countries: Bolivia, Burundi, France, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Sweden.⁵ 22 NGO representatives from Bolivia, Burundi, France, Lebanon, Morocco and Sweden participated.

Due to security concerns, the women from Saudi Arabia did not attend the CEDAW session, but their intervention was submitted by IRAW Asia Pacific on their behalf, on their request.

Learning from this Session

- The Committee remains focused on the issue of the state's understanding of the concept of substantive equality and the extent of their obligations under the treaty. They persisted in asking the state to clarify what they understood as substantive equality, equality versus equity, equality of sexes versus complementarity of sexes.
- The Committee asked many questions on alternative judicial systems and non-formal methods of dispute resolution, focusing on what role the state saw itself performing in relation to promotion of women's equality through these systems: for example the Bolivian legal system gave equal status to their indigenous/cultural 'court' system and the Burundi government also spoke of tribal councils.
- The Committee is proactively seeking information and therefore explicit clarity on obligations of the state in the territories it is occupying/administering e.g. Lebanon in relation to Palestinian refugee population, Morocco in relation to Western Sahara.

⁵ For a breakdown of the 40th CEDAW Session, see Annex 3.1.

41st CEDAW session, 30 June – 18 July 2008, New York

Overview: At the 41st CEDAW session, in New York, the CEDAW Committee reviewed 8 countries: Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Nigeria, Slovakia, Tanzania, United Kingdom and Yemen.⁶

27 NGO representatives from the 8 countries reporting at the 41st CEDAW session and 11 NGO representatives from 5 countries reporting at the 42nd CEDAW session participated.

Observations on the Training

One of the most important results of the training for a number of participants was that it shifted their understanding of substantive equality and how they are framing their demands for women's rights. It also made them reflect on the issues and sectors of women which they had excluded from the process to date for e.g. migrant women, lesbian/bisexual/transgender women etc. For some of the participants, it meant they quickly added issues to their oral statements and responses to the Committee which they would not have otherwise thought to do. It also resulted in participants from some countries deciding to engage with wider groups when they return to their country.

42nd CEDAW session, 20 October – 7 November 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland

Overview: At the 42nd CEDAW session in Geneva, the CEDAW Committee reviewed 12 countries: Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Mongolia, Myanmar, Portugal, Slovenia and Uruguay.⁷

43 NGO representatives from Bahrain, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Portugal, Slovenia and Uruguay participated.

During this session IWRAW Asia Pacific held a mentoring programme, which included 2-day orientation/training on the weekends of the session and daily debriefings throughout the 2 weeks of the review.

IWRAW Asia Pacific jointly coordinated with COC Netherlands, a thematic lunch briefing on sexuality rights, with the participation of representatives from three of the reporting countries, Ecuador, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan. Madeleine Rees from the Gender Unit of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights provided an introductory statement placing LGBT rights within the human rights framework. There was a lively and engaging discussion between the NGOs and the CEDAW Committee. It was felt that this initiative provided a space for the NGOs to raise specific marginalized issues cross-nationally, strengthening their advocacy and impact at the CEDAW session, and also enabling the Committee to discuss this issue more comprehensively with the NGOs.

⁶ For a breakdown of the 41st CEDAW Session, see Annex 3.2.

⁷ For a breakdown of the 42nd CEDAW Session, see Annex 3.3.

Evaluation

At the end of every From Global to Local session, the participants identify the positive aspects of the project as well as areas of improvement.

Among the key points of learning that emerged are:

- a clearer understanding of the principles and concepts of the Convention, in particular the meaning of substantive equality and de facto equality;
- a better understanding of how the review process worked, and how they as women's rights activists could have an impact on the process;
- new knowledge on the different ways in which the Convention could be applied to advance the human rights of women at the local level as well as of the limitations in the process;
- Better insight on Committee members, including their interests and expertise;
- Insights into new ways of working with governments;
- Better understanding on importance of lobbying the Committee, which included the preparation of the Oral Statements;
- Learning about issues, strategies and best practices in other countries;
- insights into potential follow up activities at the national level including follow up on the Concluding Observations;
- Being empowered through interaction with women's rights activists from other countries involved in similar types of activism, networking and building solidarity.

They appreciate the sustained communications from IRAW Asia Pacific in preparing for the review, and the consistent follow up by IRAW Asia Pacific which helped them see how CEDAW is an important tool for holding the government accountable for women's rights. Many reiterated that the experience of the training and their successful engagement with the CEDAW process inspired them to continue their work in their country.

Updating of the Training Materials for the Training/Mentoring Programme

In 2008, IRAW Asia Pacific began the process of reviewing and updating the From Global to Local training kit. A process of translation of these materials into Spanish, French, Russian and Arabic has also been initiated.

Promotional Brochure

To facilitate outreach and dissemination of the Global to Local Programme, IRAW Asia Pacific has begun developing a brochure for this programme, and prioritised translations of this brochure into French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic.

Advisory Group and Its Role

The From Global to Local project has a core team of advisors⁸ who help in the identification of participants, planning and running of the project and conducting of training, known as the Programme Management Team (PMT). At the annual meeting in 2008, we discussed organising thematic briefings at the CEDAW session to highlight minority groups / issues not adequately addressed by the CEDAW Committee; providing better and more sustained support to NGOs pre and post CEDAW session, not just in the Asia Pacific region; nurturing and expanding the pool of resource persons for the training and mentoring programme; and updating and improving the training materials as well as translating them to French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian.

The need to expand and nurture our resource pool led to a process of identifying previous participants with the potential to evolve into a trainer in the programme herself. For the 41st CEDAW session we invited Afaf Jabiri from Karama in Jordan, and for the 42nd CEDAW session, we invited Sreekala M.G. from the North-East Network in India to attend the CEDAW sessions as a trainee resource person. Both of them had been a part of our programme in 2007. This enabled us to assess the skills of the individual as a potential resource person and also strengthened our links with her as a component of our continuing partnership with previous participants of the programme. This experiment turned out to be a huge success because the trainee resource persons brought their own experience of going through the programme to the new participants and was able to share with them the trainees' own examples of lessons learned and possibility for follow up.

In keeping with the decision to place more emphasis on the participation of women from minority communities and social groups and sectors that are marginalized from the mainstream in their own countries in the From Global to Local project, at the 40th session, we supported the participation of a disabled woman from a disability rights group to raise issues of disability with the Committee. For the 41st session we actively promoted the participation of women from Northern Ireland and from migrant/minority communities to participate in the pre-review process in the UK. The participation of a woman from the Northern Ireland Women's Platform and another from South hall Black Sisters is a result of this initiative. For the 42nd session we actively promoted the participation of LBT activists in order to raise issues of lesbian, bisexual and transgender in the review process.

Consultations on implementation of the Concluding Observations

Understanding the role of the Concluding Observations as a powerful advocacy tool for promoting State compliance with the CEDAW Convention, IWRAW Asia Pacific organizes Consultations that can support women's groups to monitor their implementation as a critical step in ensuring States accountability toward the fulfilment of their obligations under the CEDAW Convention.

⁸ Alda Facio (Costa Rica), Debra Leibowitz (USA) and Tulika Srivastava (India)

The Consultations bring together women's rights defenders to review the implementation of the Concluding Observations, share common obstacles and best practices, and develop strategies to overcome the obstacles and enhance the realization of women's human rights. By enabling national organisations to engage with the processes needed for the implementation of CEDAW at the national level in an integrated manner, the Consultations provide for more conscious engagement on the part of IRAW Asia Pacific in the follow up from the From Global to Local project. It alerts us to potential areas where support is required at the national level, allowing us to plan joint and partnered interventions to ensure that the knowledge gaps are bridged, effective technical support is provided, and the requirement for capacity building at the national level is responded to adequately. The main outcome of these regional and sub-regional Consultations is the development of national level strategies for taking forward the implementation of CEDAW Concluding Observations. Through an in-depth reflection on the key cross-cutting themes in the region, participants also came to a consensus on several issues that could become the foundation of cross-national or regional strategies towards advocating for the full implementation of CEDAW in the region.

In May 2008, IRAW Asia Pacific, in collaboration with the South Asian Taskforce on the Advancement of CEDAW (SATAC), organised the South Asia Regional Consultation on the Implementation of Concluding Observations. The objectives were: (1) To share experiences on the follow up undertaken to further the implementation of Concluding Observations nationally; and (2) To develop national and cross-national strategies towards advocating for the implementation of Concluding Observations. This Consultation provided IRAW Asia Pacific with an opportunity to map the extent and type of technical support needed in the region. Among the practical outcomes was a request for training on CEDAW and writing of a shadow report from the women's groups from Afghanistan, and agreement from Indian NGOs agreed to organise a national consultation on the implementation of the Concluding Observations.

Campaign for the Ratification and Use of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (OP-CEDAW)

IRAW Asia Pacific is the secretariat of the global campaign for the ratification and use of the OP-CEDAW, called "Our Rights Are Not Optional!", guided by a group of international expert advisors.⁹ Through 2008, a further nine states ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW¹⁰ bringing the total number of ratifications to 96. While no decisions were handed down by the Committee under the OP in 2008, a number of communications and a request for an inquiry were lodged with the Committee.

In 2008, the campaign focused on work in Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, seeking to build capacity of women's groups in these regions to work for ratification and, in cases

⁹ Regional representatives: Kinga Lohmann (Europe); Wendy Harcourt (Europe), Sapana Malla (Asia); Seema Naidu (Pacific), Marlene Libardoni (Americas); Cecilia Anandez (Latin America), Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson (Africa); Thoko Matshe (Africa), Amal Hadi (Middle East and North Africa) and Afaf Jabiri (Middle East and North Africa); independent experts: Alda Facio (Costa Rica), Shanthi Dairiam (Malaysia) and John Cerone (USA).

¹⁰ Angola, Argentina, Botswana, Colombia, Cook Islands, Nepal and Vanuatu.

where the OP was already ratified, to facilitate the use the Optional Protocol. The Consultations created space for participants to share potential communications and inquiries and to discuss their relative merits with the IWRAW Asia Pacific team. One outcome has been the submission of several communications and inquires to the Committee, which is supported by the Campaign. Strengthening alliances with women's groups in the regions that would carry the work forward under the campaign was a critical objective of this process.

IWRAW Asia Pacific conducted a number of trainings on the OP-CEDAW in 2008 in different regions of the world including South-East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Africa. Sessions on the OP-CEDAW are also integrated into on-going trainings and consultations, whenever possible.

In March 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific embarked on a strategic partnership on the OP to CEDAW with the Karat Coalition, a regional coalition that advocates for gender, social and economic justice in Central & Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States that is based in Poland. At the meeting held in Warsaw, IWRAW Asia Pacific sat with representatives from the Coalition from Poland, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, and participated in defining a plan of activity for a Karat Coalition project *"Building towards an Eastern European and Central Asia NGO Coalition on Optional Protocol to CEDAW"*.

In September, as a part of this partnership, IWRAW Asia Pacific conducted a 4 day training on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW for women's groups from six countries that have ratified the OP-CEDAW in Central and Eastern Europe, namely Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Poland and Ukraine. The training highlighted the strengths of the OP-CEDAW as a tool for promoting and protecting women's human rights and explored the procedural and substantive aspects of the OP-CEDAW including through examining the merits of potential cases which participants brought with them to the training. IWRAW Asia Pacific would collaborate with the KARAT Coalition to provide technical assistance to several of the women's groups interested in filing cases under the OP-CEDAW.

Together with this, IWRAW Asia Pacific organised a global training of trainers on OP-CEDAW in Warsaw, with the participation of some members of the Karat Coalition, and other partners from other parts of the world. The training had two objectives: (1) expanding our pool of resource persons on OP-CEDAW globally and (2) testing some elements of the training package on OP-CEDAW which is currently in production.

In May 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific supported the Women's Legal Bureau of the Philippines in a training workshop on the OP to CEDAW, held in Bangkok for 30 participants from the Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, Singapore and Vietnam. The aim was to provide women's groups in the region with an overview on the OP-CEDAW, to discuss ratification strategies and to explore the potential uses and relevance of the procedures under the OP-CEDAW for protecting and promoting women's human rights.

In November, IWRAW Asia Pacific collaborated with WILDAF/FeDDAF West Africa and Women In Politics Support Unit (WIPSU) Zimbabwe – the coordinators of the Africa Regional Optional Protocol to CEDAW Campaign and members of the Advisory Group to the

Global Campaign – to organize an Africa Consultation on *‘Realising the Potential of CEDAW and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW as a Tool for the Protection and Promotion of Women’s Human Rights’*. The meeting held in Cape Town, South Africa from 12-13 November 2008 brought together over 20 women from Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Representatives of regional networks including FEMNET and Ms. Dorcas Coker-Apiah (CEDAW Committee member from Ghana) also attended.

The meeting was an opportunity to bring together women’s groups in Africa interested in doing more work around CEDAW and the OP to CEDAW, to share IRAW Asia Pacific’s experiences in using CEDAW as a tool for change. At the meeting, some plans for collaborative work in the region were put in place and some potential communications and inquiries under the OP-CEDAW were identified and discussed. IRAW Asia Pacific will support the process of taking these cases forward. Following this meeting, a questionnaire was developed and disseminated to track successful ratification strategies from around the world. IRAW Asia Pacific also organized a workshop on the OP-CEDAW during the AWID Forum in Cape Town. Over 80 people attended this workshop.

In April 2008, a representative of IRAW Asia Pacific attended the first meeting of women’s groups in Manila, Philippines where it was agreed to file a request for an inquiry detailing the impact of the policy put into place by the City Council of Manila denying women access to information on contraception, as well as the federal government’s complicity in these widespread and serious violations of women’s rights under CEDAW. IRAW Asia Pacific was involved in drafting the request, together with the Manila coalition and Centre for Reproductive Rights. A response from the Committee is pending.

Publications and Resources

OP-CEDAW Training Manual

In 2008 IRAW Asia Pacific decided to develop a training manual on the OP-CEDAW which could serve as a resource for trainers and resource persons.

The Manual will provide a background to the OP-CEDAW, an Overview of the main stages of the OP Procedures and of the Committee’s Working Methods. It will provide guidance as to the Communications Procedure from submission to follow-up including technical requirements for filing a Communication and the Post-admissibility Stages. It will also provide guidance as to the Inquiry Procedure, from submission to follow-up.

The Manual will also provide some guidance on training methodologies. Work on the Manual is on-going.

2nd Edition of OP-CEDAW Resource Guide and Translation into Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian

'Our Rights are Not Optional!' Advocating for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through its Optional Protocol: A Resource Guide was first published in 2005 and used widely by women's groups around the globe. In 2008 IRAW Asia Pacific decided to produce a 2nd edition of the Resource Guide bringing certain aspects up to date and re-printing to enable even wider distribution and use. In addition, IRAW Asia Pacific prioritised the translation of the Resource Guide into Arabic, French, Spanish and Russian.

Technical Papers Series on the OP-CEDAW

Overview of the Rule Requiring the Exhaustion of Domestic Remedies Under the OP-CEDAW, by Donna Sullivan

This paper provides an in depth guide to the exhaustion requirement under the OP-CEDAW to guide NGOs and lawyers wanting to use the OP-CEDAW. In addition to presenting the approach of the Committee to date on the elements of the rule, the paper examines certain aspects of the rule to which the CEDAW Committee has not yet made definitive views by looking to the jurisprudence of other Committees.

Advisory Group Meeting

IRAW Asia Pacific convened a meeting of the Global Advisory Group on the OP to CEDAW in Warsaw in September¹¹. The meeting, taking place after two years, enabled the Advisory Group to assess the work of the campaign over the last year and help prioritise direction and activities for the coming years. It was also an opportunity to orient new Advisory Group members to the work of the Campaign. A programme of action for the coming two years was decided upon. It is expected that Advisory Group members will play a critical role in leading some activities as well as in monitoring the implementation and impact of the work over the next year.

Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR)

2008 witnessed a historic moment for the recognition and protection of economic social and cultural rights with the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR by the General Assembly in November 2008. This achievement was the result of over 10 years of activism.

¹¹ Kinga Lohmann (Europe); Wendy Harcourt (Europe), Sapana Malla (Asia); Seema Naidu (Pacific), Marlene Libardoni (Americas); Cecilia Anandez (Latin America), Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson (Africa); Thoko Matshe (Africa), Amal Hadi (Middle East and North Africa) Afaf Jabiri (Middle East and North Africa); Independent experts: Alda Facio (Costa Rica), Shanthi Dairiam (Malaysia) and John Cerone (USA)

IWRAW Asia Pacific has engaged in the process of creating an OP-ICESCR since 2003 with dual objectives: to share our expertise in negotiating the text of the OP-CEDAW and to ensure that women's experiences of ESCR violations are present in the negotiations and reflected in the drafting of the OP. To this end, IWRAW Asia Pacific has supported a team of women from around the globe to be a part of every Open-Ended Working Group discussion on the OP-ICESCR, ensuring that the specific ways in which women experience violations of their ESCRs and the specific barriers to the recognition and protection of those rights was visible and reflected in the text of the OP-ICESCR.

In 2008 team members participated in the 5th Open-Ended Working Group on the OP to the ICESCR, highlighting gender-specific concerns and implications of proposed language and provisions, and collaborating with the NGO Coalition on the OP to the ICESCR. IWRAW Asia Pacific was also present at the Human Rights Council in June, when the drafting of the OP-ICESCR was completed and the text adopted by consensus.

The Optional Protocol includes both a communication procedure (an individual, group of individuals or a person or organisation on behalf of them, can lodge a complaint with the Committee that their ESC rights have been violated) and an inquiry procedure (enabling the Committee to investigate grave and/or systematic violations of rights in the ICESCR), similar to the provisions of the OP to CEDAW. In addition, it contains some new elements, including: the potential for a 'Friendly Settlement' [Article 7], and provision for Inter-State Communications¹²

IWRAW Asia Pacific participated in the ESCR-Net Conference in December 2008 in Nairobi, Kenya. With the adoption of the OP-ICESCR imminent, the NGO Coalition for the OP-ICESCR, of which IWRAW Asia Pacific is a partner, discussed future work including the possibility of establishing a Campaign for the Ratification of the OP-ICESCR after its adoption by the General Assembly. IWRAW Asia Pacific was invited to share its experience in initiating and leading the OP-CEDAW Campaign to help inform the establishment of such a Campaign for the OP-ICESCR. IWRAW Asia Pacific also made a presentation on what the OP-ICESCR can offer for women.

Human Rights Council

The 8th Session of the Human Rights Council was a significant one for the visibility of women's human rights concerns. On 5 June, two panels were held during the Council plenary on critical women's human rights concerns, one on Violence against Women and the other on Maternal Mortality. IWRAW Asia Pacific was closely involved in lobbying for the inclusion of these panels in the programme of work of the Council as well as in supporting NGO participation in the panels. In the same session, the Council reviewed Special Procedure Mandates, and IWRAW Asia Pacific specifically followed and lobbied around the resolution renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking, to ensure the scope of the mandate remained wide and inclusive of the diverse experiences of women in this context.

¹²

See annex for note on critique of the text of the Op to ICESCR

IWRAW Asia Pacific followed the adoption of the Universal Periodic Review process at the UN Human Rights Council with interest, seeing it as a potential mechanism for advocacy on women's rights, and for greater integration of women's rights in the work of the Council. During the 1st Session of the Universal Periodic Review, in April 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific was present with the aim of (a) monitoring and advocating the inclusion of women human rights in the review; (b) providing technical support to NGOs from India, Indonesia and Philippines to highlight women's rights concerns; (c) networking with groups working on the UPR process and discussing future collaboration; and (d) assessing the potential of the UPR. IWRAW Asia Pacific also participated in the 2nd Session of the Universal Periodic Review, in May 2008. The second review saw more opportunities for NGO engagement as a result of consistent lobbying for increased NGO participation in the process, including greater opportunities for side events. During the adoption of the working group reports from the 1st and 2nd UPR, IWRAW Asia Pacific actively highlighted the gaps in reflecting women's human rights concerns in the review process, encouraging greater and stronger recommendations relating to women's human rights in the reports. IWRAW Asia Pacific supported the participation of national women's groups from Malaysia, Philippines and India, and has produced a *Guide to Engaging with the Universal Periodic Review* for women's groups.

The challenge of bringing recognition to the human rights of women and of other communities that face discrimination including those discriminated against because of their sexual orientation and gender identity remains a significant challenge which IWRAW Asia Pacific continues to address through its advocacy at Human Rights Council, in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

Treaty Body Reform

In 2008 the new framework for reporting which emerged from the discussions on treaty body reform was submitted to all treaty bodies. Accordingly, each state party is required to prepare a 'common core document' that would be submitted to all treaty bodies along with a 'treaty specific document' that would relate to implementation of the specific treaty under review. The proposal for changing the composition of the treaty bodies was discarded with efforts instead to increase the harmonisation across treaty bodies.

IWRAW Asia Pacific, as part of the Coalition of NGOs working on the Treaty Body Reforms, collaborated in a submission to the UN Treaty Bodies Inter-Committee Meeting and Annual Chairpersons Meeting in June 2008. The submission included proposals for the harmonisation of the practices and procedures of the Treaty Bodies in order to ensure expansion of NGO engagement in the work of the treaty bodies and greater accessibility to information for NGOs including on implementation of treaty body recommendations and decisions under the Optional Protocols. The submission received positive feedback from the Treaty Body Chairs.

In 2008, the CEDAW Committee adopted a new procedure for monitoring the implementation of key recommendations made to states under review, by selecting two key recommendations and requesting the state to report back on implementation within one or two years of the review. This has given activists a new opportunity for monitoring state

action and feeding relevant information to the CEDAW Committee on these particular recommendations.

Gender Equality Architecture Reforms (GEAR)

Implementation of the recommendations of the UN's High Level Panel on Systemwide Coherence with regard to the creation of one gender entity for the UN system has seen continued debate and discussion throughout 2008.

As envisioned at present, the new entity would seek to consolidate the mandates and powers of existing mechanisms focusing on women's rights and empowerment.¹³ It would be led by an Under-Secretary General of the UN and would have a dual mandate of both normative and programmatic responsibilities and would operate at both global policy and country levels. In order to take this discussion forward, the Deputy Secretary-General's Office commissioned an 'Options Paper' looking at the next stage of structural recommendations for models for a new gender entity in June 2008. The GEAR campaign, a broad NGO coalition working in this area of which IWRAW Asia Pacific is a member circulated a submission outlining core principles and suggestions for the consideration in coming up with the different models.

The Options Paper was finalised and circulated to governments in July 2008, setting out four models:

- A. Maintaining the status quo
- B. Creating autonomous fund/programme
- C. Creating a department within the Secretariat
- D. Creating a "composite" (previously called a "hybrid") entity

The GEAR Campaign feels that Options B and D appear to have the most promise of meeting the requirements set out by the coherence panel and advocated by women's groups. Through membership in the GEAR Campaign, IWRAW Asia Pacific keeps abreast of the latest developments and disseminates information to our national partners, urging them to get involved and lobby their respective governments.

IV. Networking

Strategic Partnerships

In 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific strengthened its partnership with several women's rights and human rights organizations and networks, engaging in collaborative and substantive work for the better integration of the principles of CEDAW and of women's human rights in a range of activities.

¹³ - the Division for the Advancement of Women [DAW], the Office of the Secretary General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues [OSAGI], the United Nations Development Fund for Women [UNIFEM]) and the UN Institute for Research on Women (INSTRAW).

Among them are:

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Chiang Mai, Thailand

IWRAW Asia Pacific has developed strong links of collaboration with APWLD on civil society advocacy relating to the process of establishing the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the ASESAN Commission on Women and Children (ACWC) and the ASEAN Commission on Migrant Workers (ACMW). This has led to the formation of the Women's Caucus for the ASEAN human rights process, and extremely dynamic consultations with women's groups in the ASEAN region have taken place as a result. While the focus has been on advocacy for the inclusion of women's concerns and gender perspectives into the mechanisms being created by ASEAN, the process has also created a strong network of women's groups in the region that has the capacity to be active in the promotion of women's human rights perspectives in broader human rights arenas.

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia) Bangkok, Thailand

IWRAW Asia Pacific has worked in collaboration with two strong networks supported by Forum Asia, SAPA (Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy) and ANNI (Asian Network on National Human Rights Institutions).

In SAPA, IWRAW Asia Pacific is the designated Gender Focal Point, and the Women's Caucus has worked very closely with SAPA in the process of lobbying for greater civil society participation in drafting the Terms of Reference for the AIHRC.

With ANNI the links have been in the process of engagement with the civil society processes associated with the Asia Pacific Forum on National Human Rights Institutions.

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), Geneva, Switzerland

The links between IWRAW Asia Pacific and the ISHR have grown in the year 2008, from a simple request for logistical and administrative support in Geneva in January 2008, to the participation of a staff member in their human rights training in March 2008 to collaboration as partners in the organization of the NGO Forum at the APForum in July 2008.

The collaboration with a mainstream human rights group that is based in Geneva and that maintains regular links with the OHCHR and activities related to the Human Rights Council enables IWRAW Asia Pacific to remain informed and up to date as to developments relating to women's human rights.

International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC), New York, USA

IWRAW Asia Pacific supported the participation of women from the From Global to Local project in a meeting organized by the IWTC on links between CEDAW and Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2007. The links have grown since then, with IWTC offering fiscal,

logistical and administrative support to IRAW Asia Pacific for the From Global to Local project in New York during the sessions of the CEDAW Committee held there once a year.

In addition, following on the focus of the IWTC on work on women and conflict and in particular on SC Resolutions 1325 and 1820, IRAW Asia Pacific has brought them on board as collaborating partners in the process of advocating for a General Comment on Women affected by Conflict with the CEDAW Committee. The IWTC is a leading member of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in New York and brings along with it a vast range of linkages and experiences on women and conflict.

Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC)

IRAW Asia Pacific renewed its links with the WHRD IC at the AWID Forum in Cape Town, South Africa at the end of 2007 and has maintained its links with this Coalition since then. The partnership with the WHRDIC enables outreach to broader groups of women working on women's human rights and in particular on violations of women's human rights defenders through the Urgent Alerts put out by the Coalition. In addition, IRAW Asia Pacific hopes to be engaged with the Coalition through collaborative work on a documentation manual for WHRDs.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Geneva, Switzerland

WILPF is a new partner for IRAW Asia Pacific, providing fiscal, logistical and administrative support in Geneva for the From Global to Local project twice a year when the CEDAW Committee sessions are held in Geneva. In addition, as one of the oldest organizations working on issues of women, peace and security from a base in Geneva, WILPF is a welcome collaborating partner for the work IRAW Asia Pacific is doing in relation to a potential General Comment from the CEDAW Committee on Women affected by Conflict.

Other Arenas of Engagement

In **February 2008**, IRAW Asia Pacific participated in the 1st Asian Regional Consultation on the Durban Review Conference (DRC), a joint initiative between FORUM ASIA and International Movement Against all Forms of Racial Discrimination (IMADR), held in Bangkok. The consultation reviewed the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in terms of its implementation by Asian governments and the contributions of civil society, identified issues and challenges encountered since the World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001 and developed action plans in the context of the review process. Among the issues identified were: racism and xenophobia linked to migration, trafficking, stateless persons and refugees, ethnic minorities, indigenous persons, discrimination based on work and descent, LGBT and religious discrimination.

In **March 2008**, IRAW Asia Pacific participated in a workshop on Reproductive Rights organized by the Reproductive Rights Advocacy Alliance Malaysia (RRAAM), in Kuala Lumpur. This was RRAAM's first seminar to engage with experts, women's activists and CSOs to discuss issues of abortion and contraception rights for women in Malaysia.

In **May 2008**, IWRAW Asia Pacific participated in a Consultation on “ASEAN Charter, ASEAN People’s Charter and the ASEAN Human Rights Body” in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. This workshop was organised by the Southeast Asia Committee for Advocacy (SEACA), Asian Forum of Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM).

The objectives of the workshop were to develop better understanding and generate constructive debates on the ASEAN Charter and to facilitate Malaysian civil society participation in these processes. In addition, it focused on developing an action plan for Malaysian civil society organizations on their engagement with Malaysian government and on coordination with SAPA Working Group on ASEAN and the Task Force on ASEAN and Human Rights at the regional level.

In **June**, IWRAW Asia Pacific participated in a meeting of Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW) held in Bangkok, Thailand, to discuss the follow up process to the Beijing Conference on Women and in particular discussions regarding the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Conference, Beijing +15. IWRAW Asia Pacific was invited to make a presentation on the current status of CEDAW in view of the shift of the Committee's Secretariat and sessions to Geneva, and on the status of women's rights concerns in terms of processes of UN reform and debates on the Gender Architecture.

In **July**, SUARAM and Era Consumer organised a one day consultation workshop with NGOs in Malaysia to assess the performance of SUHAKAM (the Malaysian National Human Rights Institution) and to facilitate possible joint action among interested Malaysian NGOs on advocacy concerning SUHAKAM and the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions (ICC). Representatives of IWRAW Asia Pacific attended.

In **July**, IWRAW Asia Pacific collaborated with Forum Asia and the International Service for Human Rights to coordinate the NGO Forum held prior to the annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum on National Human Rights Institutions. IWRAW Asia Pacific ensured the participation of our partners in the NGO meeting and also ensured that women’s human rights concerns were included in the discussions both at the NGO meeting and at the AP Forum.

In **November**, IWRAW Asia Pacific attended a meeting organized by the Non-Aligned Movement Institute on the Empowerment of Women. Madame Margaret Ho, Policy Advisor for the Malaysia Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, presented on a range of topics related to Malaysia’s activities and initiatives for achieving gender equality including its plan to enhance its implementation and monitoring on CEDAW.

In **November**, IWRAW Asia Pacific participated in the 1st Asia Pacific Regional Consultation on Refugee Rights (ACRR), held in Kuala Lumpur and organized by FORUM Asia, as a regional initiative aimed at advancing the promotion and protection of refugee rights within the Asia Pacific region. Over 110 participants from 70 organizations based in 13 countries in the Asia Pacific region attended the Consultation.

In **November**, IRAW Asia Pacific co-organised a number of events during the AWID Forum in Cape Town, South Africa:

- collaborated with ARROW, APCASO and WWHR - New Ways in a launch of recent publications, which was attended by approximately 80 people. IRAW Asia Pacific promoted the 2nd edition of the English-language Guide to the Op to CEDAW as well as the Arabic, French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese and Nepali translations.
- *Building Bridges for Claiming Women's Rights through Strategic Partnerships and Collective Action* in collaboration with Centre for Reproductive Rights (CRR)
- *From Outrage to Power: Using the law as a tool for change in Conflict and Post-conflict Situations* in collaboration with International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC). Please see Annex H for a flyer of the workshop with IWTC.
- *Sustaining Women's Organizations during Conflicts* in collaboration with MADRE

V. Assessment of our work

Fulfilling our Core Objectives

Throughout 2008, the Enhancing Realization of Rights programme has contributed to the strengthening of women's advocacy for CEDAW implementation and for the full realization of women's rights through its programmes at national and international level.

The outreach of the From Global to Local project has expanded to include issues with regard to discrimination against women that remain outside the mainstream, as well as to include communities of such women in the actual CEDAW review process. This process has also enabled IRAW Asia Pacific to build links with new allies and partners, for example, in the area of migration and trafficking or LBT rights.

The work at the Human Rights Council and in particular around the UPR has kept IRAW Asia Pacific engaged in critical partnerships with mainstream human rights groups, and contributed to the advocacy for better and wider integration of women's rights concerns into the on-going work of the Council. IRAW Asia Pacific plays a significant role in these partnerships because of our expertise on CEDAW, its principles and its framework, including state's obligations under CEDAW, enrich the lobbying and advocacy efforts at the Council.

The adoption of the OP to the ICESCR also brought to an end one phase of IRAW Asia Pacific's activism on the process, and opened up the door to a new phase of campaigning for ratification and use of the new mechanism. Again, the expertise of IRAW Asia Pacific on the OP to CEDAW has informed and enriched the activism of our partners and allies and strengthened our own position within networks working on economic, social and cultural rights.

The meetings on Concluding Observations have created a very significant and dynamic link with women's groups working for CEDAW implementation at the national level, while the work around the OP to CEDAW also allows for stronger links with partners at the national level. Strategizing on bringing cases to the CEDAW Committee under the OP has enhanced

our own understanding of the mechanism, and has enabled us to enter into a dialogue with members of the Committee regarding the various obstacles and difficulties faced by women who try to access the OP.

Challenges

While some of the challenges confronted by the programme are due to external factors such as the impact of growing forms of religious fundamentalism and ultra nationalism, others are internal such as the demand for conceptual and practical expertise in new areas. The external factors, for example, restrict women's mobility and capacity to engage in advocacy at the national level for changes in laws, policies and programmes to serve the interests of women better. They also result in rejection of advocacy for women's equality as being impositions of hostile and 'outsider' cultures. The violence that accompanies these trends threatens the work of women's human rights organizations, and we have had participants in the From Global to Local project for example, who have preferred not to play a visible role at the review sessions out of fears for their own security.

At the internal level, IWRAW Asia Pacific needs to strengthen its own expertise and knowledge on areas of work that are opening up as we work with partners and categories of women that are new to us.

The constant pressure from participants in the From Global to Local project as well as from other women's rights organizations to extend support to organizations located outside the Asia Pacific region remains a major challenge. Some relationships that have been explored have had very positive results, for example, with the Karat Coalition. Others have not been so satisfying. Analysing these exploratory initiatives is imperative if we are to respond to the needs of our partners as well ensure maximum utilisation of resources.

A challenge to be addressed in the future is our approaches to strengthening our links with women's rights groups in east Asia and in the Pacific region.

Opportunities and Strengths

The recognition of the expertise and substantive contribution IWRAW Asia Pacific brings to the mainstream human rights discourse remains a major factor that enhances our capacity to work at both the national and international level with women's groups, other human rights groups, states and the UN agencies working on women's human rights. This has been well established through the work on the UPR, at the UN Human Rights Council, with GEAR and with the work around the creation of the Op to the ICESCR.

In terms of regional expansion, our advocacy work on the OP to CEDAW has led to an extremely constructive collaboration with the Karat Coalition and groups in Central and Eastern Europe. The initial discussion with the CEDAW Committee regarding obstacles faced by women when trying to access the OP has also matured into a potential for a broad meeting with the Committee in 2009.

In terms of working with new groups and new areas, our collaboration with COC Netherlands and IGLHRC on bringing sexuality rights issues to the attention of the CEDAW Committee has helped institutionalise our engagement with these organizations. The relationship with IWTC and WILPF has expanded to include collaboration on issues of women affected by conflict, and our links with ESCRNet have strengthened our work on women's economic rights. These collaborations also open up opportunities for continued dialogue with the CEDAW Committee on these themes.

The support IWRAW Asia Pacific extended to women's groups to participate in the UPR have strengthened our work and links within the OHCHR and the Human Rights Council and with mainstream human rights groups that we partner with in this work. Extending the work to include encouraging women's groups and IWRAW Asia Pacific partners to submit reports to other treaty body Committees is a part of the work in the future.

Information Dissemination, Exchange and Application (IDEAS)

I. Background

IDEAS supports the capacity building and advocacy based strategies of IWRAW Asia Pacific through consolidating developments in new knowledge that is generated by the work of the organization as well as created by the evolving nature of international human rights discourse. It prepares this knowledge for dissemination and sharing with partners and allies in a varied range of formats and ensures its integration into the technical assistance and capacity building work of IWRAW Asia Pacific.

II. Aims and Objectives

- Packaging and disseminating information on the CEDAW Convention, the content of its provisions, its principles and its framework on women's human rights;
- Developing knowledge on using the Convention more holistically and creatively by investigating new contexts and issues in application of the CEDAW framework;
- Disseminating information on the work of international human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms that have special relevance to women's human rights and CEDAW;
- Facilitating the flow of information between mainstream human rights groups and women's human rights groups to ensure that the international discourse on human rights continues to address women's rights concerns;
- Supporting the other programmes of IWRAW Asia Pacific through conducting background research, collating materials, commissioning papers, checking facts and quality control through external and peer review mechanisms, editing and publishing reports.

III. Implementation

Publications

Occasional Papers Series (OPS)

The papers or essays published in this series seek to promote clarity on CEDAW and on human rights norms in relation to women. On occasion they respond to emerging discussions and debates related to areas of focus for IWRAW Asia Pacific. They are authored by feminist activists, legal experts and human rights practitioners. The IDEAS Programme Officers provide support in proof-reading, fact checking, coordinating peer review by external readership and managing the publication schedule.

In 2008, IWRAW published 2 papers in this series, and they are:

*OPS 11: Exploring the Potential of the UN Treaty Body System in Addressing Sexuality Rights
by Tan Beng Hui*

This paper explores the potential of the UN human rights treaty body system in addressing sexuality rights, especially related to the sexual identity/preference/orientation of women.¹⁴ It investigates the scope offered to sexuality rights advocates to protect and promote these rights, and identifies and discusses points where caution may be necessary. The paper can serve as a tool of reflection for women's groups, on the importance of dealing with the right to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. It is also a call to those who engage with the different treaty bodies and in particular, with the CEDAW Committee, to include this concern in their agendas, in a way that will promote an expanded understanding and recognition of sexuality rights by the Committee.

OPS 12: The OP CEDAW as a mechanism for implementing women's human rights: an analysis of decisions 1- 5 of the CEDAW Committee under the Communications procedure of the OP CEDAW by Alda Facio

This paper analyses the first 5 decisions of the CEDAW Committee under the OP to CEDAW with a view to extracting lessons that can support women's rights activists pursuing a remedy through this mechanism to learn from experiences of bringing a claim against the state for non implementation of CEDAW.

Work on several papers started in 2008 is on-going and they are likely to be published in 2009:

- An analysis of the next 5 cases under the OP to CEDAW (cases 6-10), which will be OPS 13 in the series.
- A paper on the difference between equity and equality. This paper will be published in 2009 as OPS 14.

In addition, a paper on the right to education is under preparation, authored by Maria Graterol.

Book Projects

- *The Vertical Application of Human Rights: Incorporation of international human rights standards in the domestic legal framework* ("Treaty Incorporation Research Project"), which comprises research papers from legal scholars and activists in six Asian countries with the objectives of examining the status and implementation of international law domestically and how international standards can be used by

¹⁴

This paper is adapted from a presentation previously made at the meeting "Sexuality and Human Rights in Muslim Societies in South/Southeast Asia", Jakarta, Indonesia, 23-26 September 2004, organised by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways and the Indonesian Women's Health Foundation.

advocates at the domestic level to advance the human rights of women. The project will be finalised end 2009.

- *Women's Human Rights: Challenges and the way forward* ("Women's Human Rights" book project), which aims to document developments in the field of women's human rights at the national, regional and international levels, with a focus on the CEDAW Convention. The output from the project aims at supporting the advocacy of women activists in the region to influence national laws and development policies. This will be finalised in 2009 and may be separately published as individual papers.
- *Using the International Human Rights Agreements as a Tool for Redressing Violations of Women's Human Rights* ("Uses of CEDAW" book project) which is part of our initiative to address a gap in knowledge on how CEDAW is used as well as enhance the use of CEDAW as an instrument to garner change for women at the domestic level by looking at how women's rights advocates have been able to trigger changes in law and policy. The key output from this project is a tool or resource that would broaden and deepen the existing knowledge base on the innovative ways NGOs in different contexts were using CEDAW. Another object of this project is to track how some of the participants have utilised the knowledge gained from the "From Global to Local" training. In 2008, the work involved supporting paper writers to complete their individual papers and developing overview chapters to comment and synthesise the findings from each category of papers in readiness for eventual book publication by end 2009.

OP CEDAW Resources

Our Rights Are Not Optional!

Our resource guide on OP CEDAW, "Our Rights are not Optional" was reprinted. 1000 copies of the French and Spanish translations were also published, and in collaboration with national and regional partners we also translated and published Japanese, Nepali and Russian versions of this resource guide.

OP CEDAW Technical Papers Series

We published the first of three planned legal/technical resources on using the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, researched and authored by Donna Sullivan. This technical paper on the requirement to exhaust domestic remedies under the OP CEDAW will serve as a guide for our partners on the use of the OP. We published 1000 copies of this in 2008.

Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Litigation for Women's Human Rights Using CEDAW

In December 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific organised an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Litigation for Women's Human Rights Using CEDAW. This EGM was aimed at creating a framework for a lawyers training package that can be used by lawyers engaged in litigation for women's human rights, using CEDAW and drawing on human rights principles embedded in other human rights treaties as well.

The EGM brought together around 20 lawyers and experts who engage in litigating on women's human rights, to share their expertise and to design an outline of the key elements that would be further developed into the proposed package of 'briefing papers'.

Website <www.iwraw-ap.org>

The IRAW Asia Pacific website ensures timely dissemination of information about CEDAW-related developments and about the work of IRAW Asia Pacific. It also provides information on the NGO Campaign for an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other relevant women's human rights news. The website expands our points of contact with our main constituency, who are for the most part human rights activists, and those who have a theoretical or procedural interest in CEDAW application and implementation.

The revamping of the website begun in 2007 carried through into 2008. During this time, key sections of the website such as those relating to the CEDAW sessions were updated on a priority and utility basis. In 2008 the programme staff also decided to support the development of a CEDAW resource portal funded by UNIFEM CEDAW SEAP and CIDA, which will mean managing an overlay page which will link back to the content on the IRAW Asia Pacific pages on CEDAW.

IDEAS continues to request the linking of IRAW Asia Pacific's website to other websites. By December 2008, we recorded 271 external links which were not via search engines, only a small percentage of which are randomly generated links from websites related to spam generators with most of the external linkage being done by institutional human rights or development websites and personal websites.

Please see Annex 4 for a listing of the new sections and website statistics.

Listserve

Cedaw4change listserv

The cedaw4change listserv is currently used as a dissemination list on all matter related to CEDAW, women's human rights and human rights in general. This list was set up to address the gap in CEDAW related information and support discussion of such issues by providing a place to brainstorm, share experiences, and seek clarification on the effectiveness and implementation of Convention and other related human rights mechanism.

It is currently used as a means of disseminating timely and targeted information alerts on CEDAW and other international human rights mechanisms, as well as drawing attention to current debates around the reform of the UN treaty body system, the establishment of new human rights mechanisms including the Human Rights Council and the optional protocol to the ICESCR.

The listserv also provides a means by which to keep participants of our events updated and connected to our work and our current strategies as they usually ask to be subscribed to the list after attending our events.

The number of members subscribed to cedaw4change as of December 2008 was 825, which means an increase of nearly 200 from 2007.

Global2local listserv

The global2local listserv was set up in October 2002 as a private (closed) listserv for participants of our “From Global to Local” programme. The rationale for this listserv is to provide a safe and confidential space where members of our From Global to Local programme can keep in touch with each other for updates on CEDAW-related developments at the national level.

The list also facilitates requests for follow-up assistance, and collectively shares views or strategies to advance women’s human rights.

There were 403 subscribers on this list as of December 2008. The listserv is not moderated.

Requests for Information

Requests for information on a range of CEDAW-related matters come in from different groups, including women’s organizations, , human rights organizations, regional and international bodies, universities, donor agencies, students) from different parts of the world. Responding to these requests generates a better understanding of IRAW Asia Pacific and its work, as well as creates clarity on CEDAW and other women’s human rights processes. The information is based on what is available on our website, materials from our library, the organisation’s databases¹⁵, and on the expertise of various staff members.

IRAW Asia Pacific responded to 145 requests for information¹⁶ throughout the year.

80 of them were specific requests for CEDAW related information, on the Committee’s Concluding Observations, the CEDAW reporting process, schedule of CEDAW sessions, guidelines for the writing of NGO shadow/alternative reports, and requests to send shadow/alternative reports and for reference materials and translated materials on CEDAW, information about the OP-CEDAW and the new Human Rights Council, its linkages to the work of the CEDAW Committee. There were also more detailed queries about the substance of the Convention or its processes.

65 requests were for information requests regarding the UN reform in general, about IRAW Asia Pacific’s work, request for materials (our publications, training materials,

¹⁵ This database comprises the contact information of programme partners, advisory groups, donors, support services and other persons or organisations IRAW Asia Pacific has worked with over the years. The database was created by an in-house administrative staff in 2005, and upgraded to include more categories of information in 2006.

¹⁶ These are to be distinguished from the requests for technical assistance or training which are reported in the section on Capacity Building.

pamphlets, etc), referrals to IRAW Asia Pacific's network and contacts and funding/financial assistance.

The Resource Library

IRAW Asia Pacific's library collects select materials on CEDAW and women's human rights, predominantly focused on two main categories: (a) core collection comprising key CEDAW related documents, and (b) other reference materials.

The Core Collection consists mainly of CEDAW-related information. It also includes documents from other treaty bodies, and documents in relation to the outputs of the UN Special Rapporteurs, Annual Treaty Body Chairs meetings, and the sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights/Human Rights Council. Our collection of NGO alternative/shadow reports that make up a large part of the core collection is unique, and dates back to 1997.

Other reference materials include books, reports and periodicals on the UN treaty body system, women's human rights, feminism, and gender and development.

In 2008, IRAW Asia Pacific continued to improve and expand its collection of materials in the library by updating the library's compilation of CEDAW-related materials and other UN documents pertaining to women's human rights and expanding its collection of publications on human rights in general, and women's rights in particular.

Dissemination of Published Materials

Dissemination of our published materials, through hard copies and electronically, fills gaps in information related to CEDAW and enables IRAW Asia Pacific to reach a wider audience.

Our programme partners refer us to suitable recipients and in some cases, assist us in disseminating our publications to their networks. Copies of the volume 1-10 of the OPS series have been sent to programme partners, national partners, educational institutions, development agencies, UN agencies, human and women's rights organisations and other parties.

Hard copies are distributed at the trainings and seminars attended by and organised by IRAW Asia Pacific throughout the year.

IV. Assessment of Our Work

Fulfilling our Core Objectives

The publication of 2 Occasional Papers and the first in the series of Technical Papers on the OP to CEDAW, working with authors on forthcoming papers, revamping the website and responding to the constant stream of questions from within and outside the organization about various aspects of CEDAW and women's human rights as well as providing up to date

information on CEDAW, the OP and other human rights issues of staff and those outside the organization constitute the daily work of the IDEAS programme.

Working on the papers, for example, the one on concepts of equality and equity raised interesting questions regarding clarity on the issue concerned and facilitates the programme to search for and gather new knowledge in a wide range of areas connected to women's human rights. For example, the paper on equality and equity has emerged out of concerns expressed by resource persons who have observed the confusion that arises when these two concepts are conflated or used interchangeably.

The flow of requests for information that we receive guides our decisions on methods of dissemination. The decision to translate basic materials into as many languages as possible arises at least in part as a response to requests received. In addition, for example the decision to print the Technical Papers on the OP to CEDAW emerged because of the need to produce this paper in hard copies for use in various trainings done by IWRAW Asia Pacific and our partners. In the same way, the decision to update the Global to Local Training materials in order to include latest developments within the UN human rights system as well as to reflect contemporary concerns on women's human rights such as sexuality, reproductive rights, migration and trafficking and the economic impact of globalization on women is a response to the focus of IWRAW Asia Pacific in these areas.

Challenges

The IDEAS team constantly faces the challenge of providing more holistic and timely support to the training and advocacy programmes, in part because of the pressure of working on the revamping of the website. Identifying best ways of providing support for development of the new conceptual areas, identifying persons who can write for publications under the OPS and building up a resource pool of substantive editors and competent external readers has also proved a challenge. The IDEAS team, together with the other programme staff must also create an appropriate mechanism to help conceptualise new areas of focus around which Expert Group meetings can be organized.

In 2008, the IDEAS team began a process of finalising several outstanding book publication projects. The delays in these projects, due to both external and internal factors, have led the organization to re-think our capacity to undertake publications of an academic and collaborative nature.

As IWRAW Asia Pacific moves into arenas where making people aware of its work and history becomes more important, the IDEAS team must develop promotional materials and publications that profile the work of IWRAW Asia Pacific. Designing and disseminating such materials is a key item on the agenda for 2009.

The pressure on time of the IDEAS staff has raised the need to engage the services of at least one further staff person, on a part time basis, to update the database on journals, books and documents collected by IWRAW Asia Pacific and to make the library/resource centre materials more accessible as an internal resource for POs and resource persons.

It is hoped that when the website programming and design updates are completed in early 2009, POs can concentrate on content creation and information dissemination and making sure the website remains an online CEDAW resource.

Opportunities and Strengths

The IDEAS programme has established itself as a credible and efficient resource base on CEDAW and related women's human rights themes. With the revamped website in place, the services offered to users of the website will be enhanced. We will institute collation, updating and uploading protocol to ensure that the website and the electronic listservs can support advocacy work and provide a platform for learning and building capacity on CEDAW.

IWRAW Asia Pacific continues to be an organization that consistently produces well-researched and substantiated material on CEDAW, the OP to CEDAW and on the challenges of using CEDAW to promote and protect women's human rights. Some of the material generated by various meetings and Consultations convened by IWRAW Asia Pacific also merits publication in book form, while some articles can be published in academic journals. Exploring these modes of dissemination remains to be done in the future.

The IDEAS team aims to ensure more synergy with the two main programmes and continue to consolidate the IDEAS programme as the communications strategy for CEDAW work, while also being more proactive in defining new directions for the work of IDEAS.

INSTITUTION BUILDING

I. Overview

IWRAW Asia Pacific has three core institutional structures:

- Board of Directors
- Advisory Committee and
- Secretariat (IWRAW Asia Pacific staff)

IWRAW Asia Pacific's Board of Directors (BOD) comprises 5 members. This body has final decision-making authority for all legal and financial matters. Decision-making is by consensus.

Decisions on programmatic policy, including on the resource implications of each programme, are entrusted to an Advisory Committee (AC) which is appointed by the Board of Directors. Currently the AC comprises seven members who are regional experts on CEDAW, representing geographical regions in the Asia Pacific. Members of the Board participate in the meetings and deliberations of the AC when time permits. Decision making is by consensus. The AC meets annually to assess the implementation of the programmes, to engage in discussions regarding new trends and directions for the organization and help staff map the coming year's activities.

IWRAW Asia Pacific has a staff of sixteen full time members comprising the Executive Director, Administrative and Finance Manager, 6 Programme Officers, one Senior Finance Officer, one Senior Administrative/Logistics Officers, three finance assistants and three administrative assistants.

In addition to the above structure, IWRAW Asia Pacific also works closely with the Advisory Groups and its pool of resource persons.

II. Implementation

Board of Directors

Two Board meetings were held in 2008, one on 14 June and the other on 14 December.

The meeting on 14 June discussed and gave feedback on the audit report and annual report of 2007, the financial situation for 2008-2009, plans for expanding the scope of IWRAW Asia Pacific's work to new regions and in new emerging areas in relation to CEDAW and women's human rights, staff matters, recruitment plans for replacement of the Deputy Executive Director and various other operational policy matters.

The meeting on 14 December discussed the status of the organisation's funding situation and operational plan; the decision to hire two new programme officers and various policy decisions on staff and finance matters.

Advisory Committee

This eighth Advisory Committee Meeting was held from 8–9 August 2008, and attended by Andrew Byrnes, Miho Omi, Ruth Manorama, Savitri Goonesekera, Shireen Huq and Shanthi Dairiam and Ivy Josiah representing the Board of Directors and the entire staff. Andy Lynch, Kanjapat Korseiporn and Sapana Malla were not able to attend.

This year the substantive discussions of the meeting involved:

- The importance of sustaining the engagement of IWRAW Asia Pacific in the South and Southeast Asia regions: national level capacity has been built in this region and consideration must be given to the types of activities that would enrich and strengthen the already established relationships as well as drawn in new partners;
- Discussing what it meant by an 'expansion' of our programmes, regionally and substantively; the pragmatic implications such as the capacity of the organization to work in these new regions/ thematic areas; need to focus on a step by step approach;
- The gap in our implementation strategy regarding the Pacific and East Asia; it was recognized that we needed to re-engage especially with the Pacific region in a more strategic manner;
- Issues relating to the expansion in terms of linking our work on CEDAW with the work of mainstream human rights organisations and other social movements;
- Ensuring that the strategies we adopt are always dynamic and responsive and forward thinking, and also ensuring that we have the best people and advise that will support this goal.
- Balancing the need to bring in 'new blood' and retaining the institutional memory must be a consideration in recruiting new staff and moving into new areas. Mechanisms such as a system of rotation of existing AC members and reaching out for new members must be explored.

The AC evaluated the activities for 2007/2008, and discussed ideas for planned activities for the new work cycle (2008-2010), based on the presentations made by the programme officers, who received feedback and guidance based on a shared assessment of obstacles and enabling factors. The AC also shared recommendations that would help review and draw up an operational plan for the 2009-2010 activities taking into consideration the new strategic direction, priority areas and funding needs of each programme as well as the operational costs of the organization.

Review and Planning Meeting

Background & Overview

On 7 – 9 of October, IWRAP Asia Pacific held a Review and Planning Meeting at which the staff reconnected with the vision and mission and objectives of the organization and discussed the transformative change agenda of IWRAP AP as reflected in the programmes and activities implemented in 2008 and planned for 2009. The process also provided an opportunity for all to assess the programme direction collectively. This was facilitated by Susanna George and provided an opportunity to familiarise the staff with the key components of a strategic planning exercise which planned for 2009.

Fund Raising Efforts

Fund raising is an ongoing effort as the targeted amount required to carry out our activities in our “wish list” of the work in 2009-2011 has not been met. New proposals may also be developed based on needs.

The current donors are UNIFEM, UNFPA, Ford Foundation, Oxfam Novib, Hivos, Norad, Government of Netherlands, UNICEF and UNDP.

As before, for project activities where funds required were not fully met by donors, such as the ‘From Global to Local’ programme which is very resource intensive, we assisted the participants to raise funds separately for their participation at our activities.

Meetings With Donors

On 24th January, Audrey Lee paid a courtesy call on both these donors in London, on her exit journey from Geneva for the Global to Local programme. She met with Harpreet Collacott, the Human Rights Officer for **Oak Foundation** and Dr Morris Lipson of **Sigrid Rausing Trust** to explain our plans for 2008-2010 and to seek information on possibility of funding. On 24th July, Sunila and the programme staff met with Els Rijke of **HIVOS** to discuss future funding possibilities.

III. Assessment of our work

Fulfilling our objectives

In the Institution Building area, IWRAP Asia Pacific has sustained the interest and commitment of a core group of Board members and Advisors as well as resource persons, which is a reflection of the high quality of work carried out by the organization as well as of the inspirational role it plays in the field of women’s human rights work in general and in CEDAW-related work in particular.

The financial management of the organization as well as the fulfilling of obligations to donors is regular and of high calibre and the fact that many donors continue to support the work is an indication of their confidence in the organization’s programmatic and administrative capabilities.

In 2008, we have retained a core team of programme staff as well as the staff in the finance and administrative section. The recruitment of the new Executive Director and of administrative assistants has brought in additional human resources, and the transitioning out of Ms. Bee Yee Yew, the Deputy Executive Director, was carried out smoothly.

Challenges

The global financial crisis has affected the donor community quite intensely, the private foundations as well as the bilateral donors. This will undoubtedly pose a challenge for fund-raising in the coming years, especially in 2009 and 2010.

Identifying suitable new programme staff who are capable of enriching the organization with skills and expertise that is required for working in the new geographic and substantive areas as well as identifying potential resource persons and persons with technical skills in writing, translating and editing is a critical arena in which IRAW Asia Pacific has to move forward in the coming year or two.

In terms of the substantive work of IRAW Asia Pacific, strengthening the role of the Advisory Groups and of the Advisory Committee calls for creating new mechanisms for regular consultation and feedback poses a challenge. In addition, systems must be put in place that bring about changes in the governance structures, allowing for more systematic and sustainable processes to be in place in a manner that brings new faces on board while retaining the wisdom of the existing members.

Opportunities and Strengths

The credibility of IRAW Asia Pacific with donors is extremely significant and enables a steady flow of resources to the organization.

The advisors to IRAW Asia Pacific at the level of the Advisory Committee and the Advisory Groups are all experts who give of their valuable time and expertise to enrich the organization. The confidence reposed in IRAW Asia Pacific by the OHCHR and the CEDAW Committee is also a critical feature that strengthens the work and reputation of the organization.

The skills, expertise and experience of the staff, the mechanisms in place that allow for the organization to draw on the knowledge and experiences of previous staff members and the skills and capacities of partners on the ground that have been developed by IRAW Asia Pacific over the past fifteen years all provide a resource base that is invaluable for the work of the organization in the future.

The new spaces opening up for more focused advocacy on women's human rights, for example, through the UPR and GEAR processes, as well as for potential work around the proposed ASEAN human rights mechanism will create more avenues for the organization to take its work forward.

The Staff Team in 2008

A staff team of 16, including the Executive Director, takes care of the coordination and implementation of all projects by IWRAW Asia Pacific.

Staff Movements

Exits

- Tulika Srivastava left in February at the end of her contract, after a year as IWRAW Asia Pacific's Executive Director. She continues to support our work by acting as a resource person on various projects.
- Yew Bee Yee, Deputy Executive Director, resigned in June 2008.
- Janine Moussa, Programme Officer, resigned in February after 3 years at IWRAW Asia Pacific to join the Division for the Advancement of Women in New York.
- Rafidah Sahmer of the Administrative section resigned in July 2008.

Revisions

- Lisa Pusey took over from Janine Moussa, as programme officer for Enhancing Realisation of Rights. She also stepped in as Officer-in-Charge for the 6 weeks where there was no Executive Director at the post and assumed a supervisory role of projects and budgets.
- Rosfaizai bt Che Ramli's portfolio was amended to reflect her new job functions supporting the IDEAS programme.

Incoming

To replace the outgoing staff and also to cope with the expansion of activities by the organisation, seven new staff came on board in 2008.

- Sunila Abeysekera joined in April 2008 as Executive Director.
- Amy Locklear joined in February 2008 as programme officer for Building Capacity for Change, South Asia.
- Suzana Yahaya joined in June 2008 as Administrative Assistant
- Vijendran Kanisan joined in August 2008 as Administrative Assistant
- Norwazi binti Ahmad joined in August 2008 as Finance Assistant
- Wong Sau Foong joined in August 2008 as Administrative and Finance Manager.
- Beryl Lim Li Chen joined in October 2008 as Finance Assistant

Staff Development

In 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific supported the participation of Lee Wei San, programme officer for the From Global to Local programme, in the Advance Geneva Training Course in March 2008 organised by the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva. The course was held parallel to the 7th Human Rights Council to enable participants to observe the session and meet with key players working within the UN human rights system including representatives from various NGOs, staff of the OHCHR, government delegates, and the

Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Internship Programme

IWRAW Asia Pacific's internship programme offers successful applicants exposure to a range of women's human rights issues and knowledge on CEDAW and related treaty bodies. Interns participate in the on-going activities of the organization as well as engage in research and documentation, depending on the duration and timing of the internship. Interns are asked to develop position papers on various issues relating to women's rights, redrafting and updating training materials, undertake research, collation and analysis of cases and principles and assist in other ways.

In 2008, IWRAW Asia Pacific hosted two interns: Connie Tse (New York University, May-July 2008) and Carly Price (Dec 2008 to February 2009). Both the interns were assigned to assist us primarily in the Global to Local programme, redrafting our Global to Local training materials/manual and also preparation of papers that focus on issues and its compliance with CEDAW e.g. disability.

Executive Director

Sunila Abeysekera took on the position of Executive Director of IRAW Asia Pacific in April 2008. Actively involved in working for women's rights and human rights in the Asian region and globally over the last twenty five years, she has been a resource person and trainer on the issues of women's rights and human rights, conflict transformation and peace building, and has researched and written on issues of women and conflict, and on reproductive rights and sexual rights issues. She has been a core national partner of IRAW Asia Pacific for many years.

Sunila is also closely associated with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development (APWLD), SANGAT (the South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers), the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia), The Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights and is a key partner in the Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders and in the Feminist Dialogues process. She is a member of the global Civil Society Organizations Committee of the UNDP Administrator and was awarded the UN Human Rights Prize in 1998 for her work on human rights in the Asia-Pacific region.

Programme Officers

Programme: Enhancing the Realisation of Rights (ERR)

Lisa Ellen Pusey (ERR Focal Point)

Lisa is a holder of a post-graduate Diploma in Legal Practice, College of Law, Sydney, Australia and Bachelor of Arts/Law BA/LLB, University of New South Wales. Prior to joining us she was the Programme Officer for the Violence Against Women (VAW) Programme and Women's Human Rights (WHR) Working Group at the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD). Her work involved a range of activities designed to strengthen the effectiveness of existing human rights mechanisms to address VAW and build the capacity of women's groups to advocate for eliminating existing and emerging forms of VAW. Lisa conceptualises, plans and implements these activities. Training and enabling women from the region to know their rights under CEDAW and the OP-CEDAW, and using these in their advocacy (as well as other human rights instruments as they apply to women) is also an integral part of her work.

Lee Wei San (Global to Local)

Bachelor of Law (Hons.) from the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom (1999). Wei San was called to the Malaysian Bar in 2001 and practiced in the field of corporate and construction law. Prior to joining IRAW Asia Pacific as a full time programme officer, she worked as project coordinator for the Global Consultation on the OP-CEDAW held in August 2005. She also volunteers at the Women's Aid Organisation, Malaysia.

Programme: Building Capacity for Change (BCC)

Amy Locklear (BCC Focal Point & South Asia)

B.A. Political Science, University of Michigan, J.D. (1992); University of Arizona College of Law (1995); LL.M., Human Rights and Social Justice, University of New South Wales (2007). Prior to joining IRAW Asia Pacific, and for approximately 10 years, Amy practiced

American Indian law at private law firms in the United States. In 2007, Amy assisted in the development of a report on the status of human rights and native land rights in Sarawak, Malaysia. Amy's areas of interest include indigenous women's rights, collective and individual human rights in the context of women's human rights and the impact of social, cultural and religious values on women's human rights.

Wathshlah Naidu (South East Asia)

B.A Anthropology & Sociology/Literature, University of Malaya (Malaysia). Wathshlah's involvement in women's human rights began when she was employed as a Law Reform Officer at Women's Aid Organisation, Malaysia. Prior to joining IWRAW Asia Pacific, she spent 3 1/2 years working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); both in Malaysia and Hong Kong. Her focus has been primarily on law reform and advocacy on the issue of women's rights, violence against women and children, Muslim women's rights and foreign migrant workers rights as well as international refugee law and protection, sexual and gender based violence against asylum seekers/refugees and torture survivors.

Programme: Information and Dissemination Exchange and Application Strategy

Audrey Lee (IDEAS Focal Point)

Audrey has a post graduate diploma in Communications from the University of Leicester (2006) and a L.LB (Hons) from University of Nottingham (1996). Prior to joining IWRAW Asia Pacific, she worked as a project manager and (policy) researcher in the private education industry and was also a researcher at the World Enterprise Institute, a policy organ working on socio-economic issues.

Yasmin Masidi (Research Officer)

Yasmin holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Melbourne, Australia, where she majored in History. She previously worked as a research editor in a publishing company and was involved with a number of non-governmental organisations in Malaysia, notably as the Media Officer of All Women's Action Society (AWAM). Currently, she also volunteers for several non-profit projects.

Administration and Finance Team

Wong Sau Foong (Administrative and Finance Manager)

Sau Foong is a Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (FCCA) and a member of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants. She has 16 years of experience of which 11 years were in the capacity of finance manager in the corporate sector. She joined in August 2008.

Azlini Abdul Ghani (Administration & Logistics Officer)

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (majoring in Accountancy). Worked for ten years in the accounts and administration departments of several firms. Was also with the Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD) previously, as an accounts and administrative officer. This is Azlini's second involvement with IWRAW Asia Pacific, having been employed as a Programme Assistant in February 1998 before leaving in November 2000 to practice homeopathy on a full-time basis. She rejoined the organisation in December 2003.

Liew Siew Yan (Administration and Finance Officer)

B.A. Anthropology and Sociology, University Malaya (Malaysia); and London Chamber of Commerce Certificate (L.C.C. Intermediate). Siew Yan has worked as a human resources and accounts assistant in various companies before joining IWRAW Asia Pacific. This is her first experience working with an NGO.

Suzana Yahaya (Administrative Assistant)

A recent graduate in Diploma in Business Management from Politeknik Unkgu Omar 2008, she joined in June 2008.

Vijendran Kanisan (Administrative Assistant)

A graduate of mechatronics from Kolej Negeri, Vijey joined in August 2008.

Norwazi binti Ahmad (Finance Assistant)

Norwazi holds a Diploma in Accounting from Universiti Teknologi MARA. She has 4 years experience in the insurance field and was in government service for a year. She joined in August 2008.

Beryl Lim (Finance Assistant) Beryl has a Bachelor of Business and Commerce, Monash University and 6 months experience with a commercial bank.

Rafidah Sahmer (Administration and Finance Officer)

Rafidah has an Adv. Diploma in Financial Accounting (IFA,UK), Executive Diploma in Corporate Administration (UMCCed, Malaysia). She has seven years of working experience with several local and multi-national companies in finance and administration and a year of teaching experience in a public school.

Rosfaizai (Ezza) Che Ramli (Admin / Information Communication Officer)

Ezza has a Diploma in Information Technology, Kolej Agama Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Terengganu (Malaysia). Prior to IWRAW Asia Pacific, Ezza worked as an IT Officer in Kolej Uniti Port Dickson.

Interns (June 2008-August 2008)

Connie Tse

Bachelor of Arts in History, Yale University, 2002. Currently a law student at New York University, she is at IWRAW Asia Pacific from June – August 2008 as part of the NYU Center for Human Rights and Global Justice summer fellowship programme, where she is working on a paper on CEDAW and women's disability rights and monitoring the use of CEDAW in the UN Universal Periodic Review process. Between college and law school, Connie worked as an advocate for domestic violence survivors in New York and on development programs in South Asia and Africa at Oxfam Hong Kong. At NYU, she is a board member of the Asia Law Society and Asian Pacific American Law Students Association.

Carly Price

Carly was our intern from December 2008- February 2009 from the University of Monash Castan Human Rights Law Centre. She joined us in her 2nd year of law school and supported out Global to Local activities in early 2009.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of resource persons who assisted the Building Capacity for Change Programme in delivering training in 2008

- Rea Abada Chiongson (Philippines)
- Rozana Isa (Malaysia)
- Chin Oy Sim (Malaysia)
- Tashia Peterson (Singapore)
- Tulika Srivastava (India)
- Ivy Josiah (Malaysia)
- Geeta Ramaseshan (India)
- Shanthi Dairiam (Malaysia)
- Maria Herminia Graterol Garrido (Venezuela and United States)
- Eleanor Conda (Philippines)
- Kamala Chandrakirana (Indonesia)
- Edna Aquino (Philippines)

Annex 2: Structure of the From Global to Local programme

Prior to the CEDAW Session

IWRAW Asia Pacific identifies and alerts women's groups about the scheduled reporting of their States. NGOs nominate their representatives to attend the programme and CEDAW session. Nominees have to meet the following criteria:

- Members of NGOs who are working on the CEDAW Convention;
- Willing to prepare a shadow/alternative report to the government report in collaboration with other women's groups;
- Willing to carry out follow up activities such as de-brief women's groups, publicise the CEDAW review, and monitor the implementation of CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations; and
- Those who are part of a government delegation or who have written the government's report are NOT eligible.

IWRAW Asia Pacific helps to ensure timely coordination and writing of shadow/alternative reports by the national level groups, encourages NGOs to contribute to the Committee's pre-session working group meeting, provides technical assistance as necessary to groups writing reports as well as prepare them for the CEDAW session. The technical support to NGOs ranges from the minimum of providing guidelines on the writing of NGO alternative / shadow reports¹⁷ and qualitative feedback on NGO reports, to trainings on CEDAW and shadow report writing¹⁸.

Finally, IWRAW Asia Pacific collects copies of shadow/alternative reports from NGOs and distributes paper and electronic copies of the reports to the CEDAW Committee members. NGO Shadow/Alternative Reports can be found in the IWRAW Asia Pacific website at <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/shadow_reports.htm>.

During the CEDAW session

Either a four day¹⁹ training programme or two day briefing is conducted immediately prior to the CEDAW session in Geneva / New York:

Four day training: The training is held once a year, and is held to raise NGOs' awareness and understanding of the CEDAW Convention, the UN human rights system, the dynamics of the reporting process, the CEDAW Committee's working methods and the role NGOs can play within the review process. The project also provides assistance to NGOs from the current reporting session in preparing their oral statements for the informal NGO meeting with the

¹⁷ The guidelines are updated regularly to reflect lessons learnt or new information from each CEDAW session.

¹⁸ Our trainings are generally carried out for countries in the Asia Pacific region. We provided shadow report trainings for NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and Burma (located at borders of Burma). Please refer to the section under Building Capacity for change for more information on trainings.

¹⁹ A copy of the expanded programme can be found in the annex (refer to the training programme of the 41st CEDAW session).

CEDAW Committee. A one-day evaluation and planning exercise is held at the end of the programme to share overall experiences and observations of the process and plan/strategise follow up activities upon participants' return. Participants whose government report the following week stay on to observe the review.

Two day mentoring: This is a condensed version of the training where we focus specifically on the practical lobbying at the CEDAW session and assist NGOs in preparing their oral statements for the informal NGO meeting with the CEDAW Committee.

The above is followed by a one-week observation of the review process itself at the CEDAW session and NGO advocacy with the CEDAW Committee. Participants as a team attend and observe all reviews for a week. During this time, they are mentored to lobby and interact with the CEDAW Committee members to provide them with alternative information. We also assist NGOs in setting up lunch meetings with the CEDAW Committee members so that they can highlight critical issues for women in their country and clarify any issues / questions that the Committee may have on the government report or the NGO report.

Daily debriefings of the review process are held in the evenings with participants to discuss the proceedings of the day, share experiences, thoughts and observations of the reporting process and lessons learnt. Activists whose government was reviewed that day assess the effectiveness of their lobbying and whether critical issues they raised were reflected in the questions posed by the CEDAW Committee to the government.

NGO Oral Statements can be accessed at IRAW Asia Pacific's website:
<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/brief_statements.htm>.

Post CEDAW session

Upon return to their home countries, NGO participants conduct follow up activities to help disseminate the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations, share their experiences at the CEDAW session and encourage their governments to implement the Convention and the Concluding Observations. They are also added to a private listserv for former participants of the programme to share their experiences monitoring and implementing the Convention at the national level. IRAW Asia Pacific generally tracks NGOs follow up plans through the listserv. In selected countries where NGOs have made good and concrete plans for follow up, we provide technical support via the Building Capacity for Change programme.

Annex 3.1: Annexes for the 40th CEDAW Session

Breakdown of countries and shadow reports at the 40th CEDAW Session	
Bolivia	<p>1 national report from a Coalition of women's NGOs covering all articles of CEDAW, written by CLADEM Bolivia, Oficina Jurídica para la Mujer, Catholics for a Free Choice, Movimiento de Mujeres Presentes en la Historia.</p> <p>In addition, 3 reports were also submitted by the following international NGOs: the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission Latin American and the Caribbean (IGLHRC), Congregation of Sisters of the Good Shepherd and HelpAge International.</p>
Burundi	<p>1 national report coalition from a Coalition of women's NGOs which covers all articles of CEDAW. The group includes the Burundi Women Lawyers Association, Association des Juristes Catholiques, and CAFOB an umbrella of women's organisation.</p> <p>In addition, 1 thematic report specifically on violence against women and legal status of women written by ACAT Burundi and supported by OMCT.</p>
France	1 national report y CLEF.
Lebanon	<p>3 national reports by:</p> <p>(a) 1 report covering all articles of CEDAW by a coalition of women's group coordinated by the National Committee for the Follow Up on Women's Issues (NCFUWI) and includes KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation and the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Woman (LECORVAW)</p> <p>(b) 1 thematic report on rights of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women by HELEM Lebanon.</p> <p>(b) 1 report focusing specifically on the status of refugee Palestinian women in Lebanon, written by Association Najdeh.</p>
Luxembourg	No NGO report submitted.
Morocco	1 national report covering all articles of CEDAW coordinated by Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM) in collaboration with 30 NGOs.
Saudi Arabia	1 national report from "Saudi Women for Reform", a loose collective of about 150 women in Saudi Arabia that provided information for the report.
Sweden	1 national report covering all articles of CEDAW written by a coalition

Highlights of the Informal NGO Meeting between NGOs and the CEDAW Committee to discuss the modalities of NGOs working with the CEDAW Committee, hosted by OHCHR. 14 Jan 2008. 1-3pm. Room XVI Palais de Nations

This was an informal meeting by the OHCHR with the Committee and NGOs especially those situated in Geneva, to discuss the ways and means in which NGOs can support the work of and engage the CEDAW Committee.

Among the international NGOs, OMCT, Amnesty International, FIDH, ACT, Quakers International, ICJ, Bahai International, COHRE and ARC attended meeting.

Ms Jane Connors chaired the meeting and invited NGOs to introduce their work and then opened the floor to questions to NGOs and the Committee. She stated her belief that OHCHR has been working with and will continue to work with NGOs in monitoring human rights treaties. She also invited all NGOs to work closely with the office of the NGO Liaison (Ms Laura Dolci) in creating spaces for NGO-Treaty body (and other special procedures) interaction.

Sapana Malla spoke for IWRAW Asia Pacific. She gave a brief introduction of the work IWRAW Asia Pacific has done to facilitate the work of the Committee especially through the From Global to Local programme.

In the question and answer part of the meeting, NGOs were asked questions or given some suggestions and comments by the Committee, which includes the following:

- the role NGOs should play in the preparation of the government report
- there should be more input from NGOs in the inquiry procedure especially in using inquiry to advance claims to protect Economic Social Cultural (ESC) rights violations
- NGOs were encouraged to use the communications procedure in order to develop the jurisprudence on CEDAW and support work of the Committee in developing norms through its decisions.
- With this move to Geneva, NGOs in Geneva are asking how they can now work with the Committee – it was pointed out that the Committee has been working with NGOs all this time and that there was nothing to stop the international NGOs based in Geneva from working with the Committee. Geneva based NGOs were asked if they were supporting the follow-up of decisions made under the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in any particular country.
- the submission of shadow reports by international and national NGOs have been useful and should continue

- NGOs should participate in the pre-session as the constructive dialogue is based on issues and questions developed at the pre-session
- the Committee was supported by some organisations like Bahai International who arranged dinner receptions for casual meetings with the NGOs when the Committee met in New York. Similar arrangements could be helpful if NGOs in Geneva cared to host such activities.

Responses by NGOs in Geneva: The NGOs welcomed the Committee to Geneva. Some stated that they were already working substantively on CEDAW in their women's human rights programmes. Most admitted that they have not worked with the framework of CEDAW or its processes.

IWRAW Asia Pacific was represented by Sapana Malla from the Board of Directors and Audrey Lee, programme officer.

Highlights of the Bolivian NGO side event / lunch briefing on 15 Jan 2008:

At the Bolivian NGO side event, the NGOs provided the Committee with the context of women's human rights in Bolivia in the current political changes and the effect this tension has on the constitutional amendments. The biggest challenge for them was the status of the constitutional reform in Bolivia. The government delegates who were at the review were themselves confused about the status of the new constitution. The NGOs also raised critical issues on the independence of the judiciary and highlighted in particular the situation surrounding the Constitutional Court and how it was being undermined by the government. Another issue discussed was the State's understanding of equality and diversity which is regressing with one result being the lowering of the status of women's institutions. Sexual diversity and reproductive rights (in particular high rate of teenage pregnancy and abortion) was another major issue discussed. Though the State is supposed to be secular, religious institutions do impact policy making. The NGOs requested that the Committee made recommendations to the government which includes amongst others, strengthening the Vice Ministry, respecting the rule of law and for trainings on women's human rights and state obligations under the different human rights instruments to be conducted for staff within the ministry.

Annex 3.2: Annexes for the 41st CEDAW Session

Breakdown of countries and shadow reports	
Finland	1 national report by the Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations.
Iceland	1 national report by the Icelandic Human Rights Centre.
Lithuania	<p>1 national report prepared by Social Innovation Fund and European Innovation Center for the Lithuanian Coalition of Non Governmental Organisations for the Protection of Women's Human Rights.</p> <p>1 thematic report on sexual and reproductive rights and health by the Center for Equality Advancement.</p>
Nigeria	<p>1 national report coordinated by Women's WACOL for the Nigeria Coalition on CEDAW Report.</p> <p>1 national report by BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights for the Nigeria NGO CEDAW Coalition.</p> <p>1 report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council.</p>
Slovakia	1 national report coordinated by Pro Choice Slovakia, in collaboration with women's NGOs.
Tanzania	<p>1 national report coordinated by Women's Legal Aid Centre (WLAC) on behalf of Southern Africa Human Rights Non Governmental Organisations' Network (Sahringon) Tanzania Chapter.</p> <p>1 thematic report on older women prepared by HelpAge International Tanzania.</p>
United Kingdom	<p>NGOs:</p> <p>1 national report by the United Kingdom Women's National Commission.</p> <p>1 national report by Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP), on women in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>1 report on the State of the Women's NGO Sector submitted by Women's Resource Centre.</p> <p>1 thematic report on Violence against Women compiled by Purna Sen, Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics and Liz Kelly, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University</p>

	<p>1 thematic report on minorities by the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM).</p> <p>NHRIs:</p> <p>1 report by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>1 report by the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ).</p>
Yemen	1 national report coordinated by Sisters' Arab Forum in collaboration with NGOs.

Highlights from the Nigerian NGO lunch briefing with CEDAW on 1 July 2008:

The NGOs gave a comprehensive presentation which covered political participation; constitutional reform; affirmative action plans and implementation of CEDAW; Violence Against Women bill initiatives; Nudity and Sexual Intimidation Bill; Sexual and Reproductive Rights - linkages between maternal mortality rates, early marriages and the lack of girls' education; Low enrolment and high dropout rates in education; unemployment of women; Discriminatory laws in the family (in particular the Islamic Law on family property) and in citizenship; lack of funding for the women's ministry; female genital mutilation; access to ownership of land; rural women. The Committee were able to obtain clarification on many of the issues above, and many of the issues raised in the lunchtime briefing were then included by the Committee in the inter-active dialogue with the State. Some additional questions raised by the Committee included the domestication and application of CEDAW in the national legal system, whether Nigeria was a party to the African Charter and its Protocol; the linkages between the nudity bill and freedom of expression; legal protection for women in the informal sector; the role of the national NGOs in the preparation of the state report; and the application and treatment of different types of law, i.e., Constitutional law, Sharia law, Civil Law in Nigeria.

Annex 3.3: Annexes for the 42nd CEDAW Session

Breakdown of countries and shadow reports	
Bahrain	2 reports: 1 joint NGO report coordinated by the Bahrain Women's Union. 1 joint NGO report by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), Caram Asia and the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR) on the issue of women migrant workers.
Belgium	No report.
Burma	1 report: 1 joint report by a coalition of women's NGOs called Women of Burma.
Canada	3 reports: 1 NGO joint report coordinated by the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action. 1 thematic report by Voice of Women for Peace on torture by non-state actors in the private sphere. 1 joint NGO report by BC CEDAW Group.
Ecuador	4 reports: 1 report by CLADEM Ecuador. 1 report by Corporacion Humanas. 2 thematic report on lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender and intersexed women by Organizacion Ecuatoriana de Mujeres Lesbianas – OEML and Taller de Comunicación Mujer.
El Salvador	1 report: 1 report from CLADEM El Salvador.
Kyrgyzstan	4 reports: 1 thematic report by Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan on Violence against Women and Women's Political Participation. 1 joint NGO report coordinated by Council of NGOs. 1 thematic report by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender organisation 'Labrys' on Lesbian and Bisexual Women and Transgender persons. 1 thematic report by Tais Plus on sex workers.
Madagascar	No reports.
Mongolia	3 reports: 1 joint NGO report by CEDAW Watch, National Centre Against Violence (NCAV), Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD). 1 supplementary report on trafficking of women in Mongolia submitted by the Mongolian Gender Equality Center. 1 thematic report on the Status of Lesbian and Bisexual Women and Transgendered Persons prepared by Anaraa Nyamdorj and Robyn

	Garner, representing a Coalition of Mongolian LGBT Rights Activists.
Portugal	1 report: 1 report by Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights (PPDM).
Slovenia	2 reports: 1 joint NGO report coordinated by Women's Lobby Slovenia. 1 thematic report by Lesbian Association SKUC-LL on of lesbian and bisexual women.
Uruguay	1 report: 1 joint report from CLADEM Uruguay and Mizangas

Highlights from selected NGO lunch briefings:

NGO lunch briefing organized by Ecuador on 21 October 2008

There were 4 Committee members at this lunch briefing (Ms Begum, Ms Zerdani, Ms Hayashi and Ms Pimentel), with a large group of NGOs from the programme, and the IRAW Asia Pacific team. The NGOs made brief presentations (some with interpretation from Spanish to English) which were followed by questions from the Committee. The NGOs were very organised and efficient in answering the questions. Ms Begum raised questions on the percentage of lesbian women in Ecuador, sex education, HIV/AIDS, and strategies to combat poverty. Ms Zerdani raised questions on reproductive health and rights, whether free contraception is provided and what kind of campaigns there are on promoting contraception, and the percentage of international aid received. Ms Hayashi noted that at the Universal Periodic Review on Ecuador, the issue of truth commissions were raised and asked whether women victims and their families were consulted. She also raised the issue of the independence of the judiciary.

NGO lunch briefing organized by Kyrgyzstan on 22 October 2008

The NGO delegation structured their lunch briefing so that 3 speakers would make presentations on the general overview of women in the country, domestic violence, status of LBTs and sex workers. In the end however, the Committee members' questions were interspersed among the presentations, transforming the process into a dialogue. Although initially this seemed to be a bit harrowing for the speakers, in the end the process was fairly effective in both surfacing in more detail the critical issues in the countries and allowing the Committee members to focus on the areas in which they were most interested.

With regard to discrimination against sex workers, the Committee members, especially Ms Dairiam and Ms Patten, asked many probing questions regarding the nature of the discrimination that prevents sex workers from obtaining passports from the government. It took some time for the NGO representative to articulate the reasons. The Committee members acknowledged that their questioning on the issue was

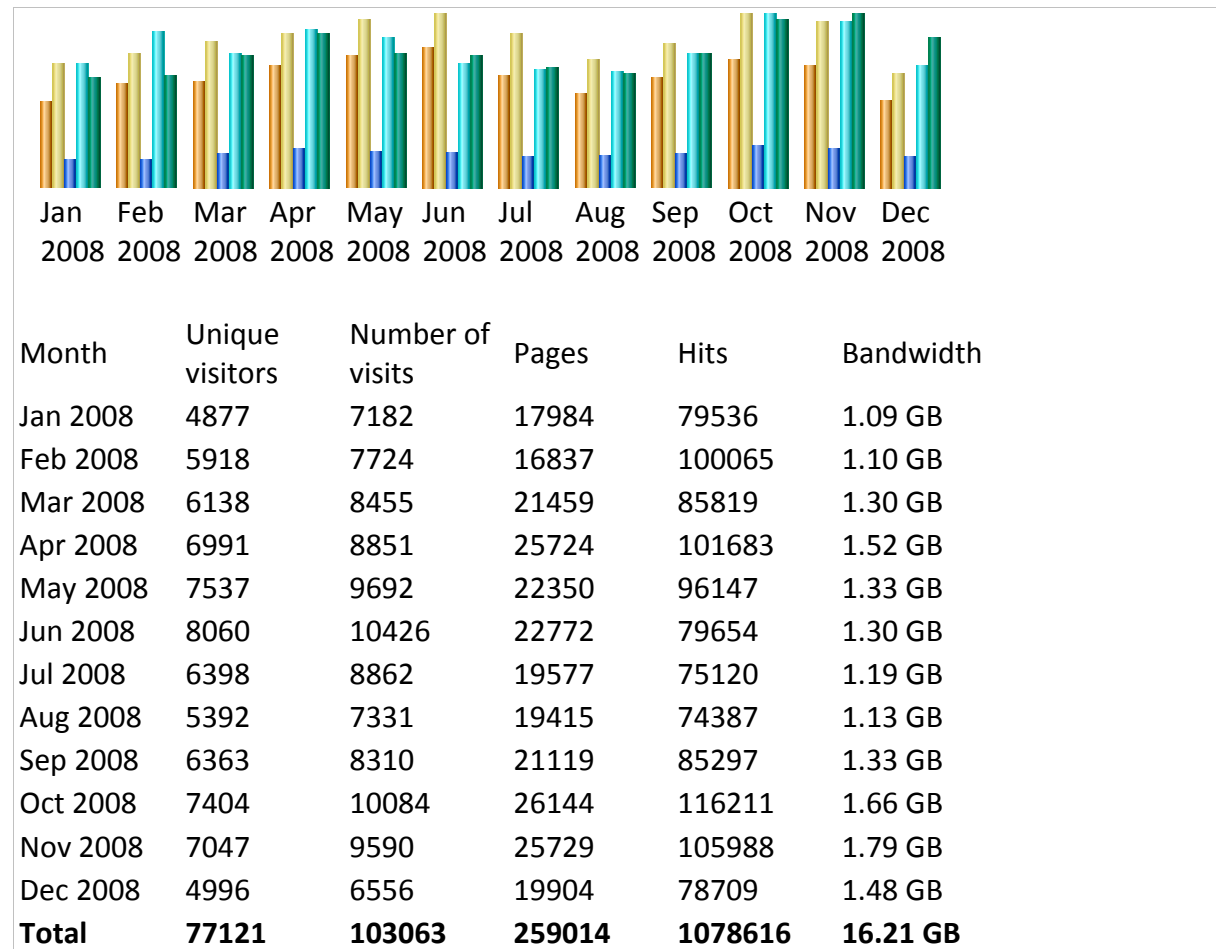
intense, but explained that it was critical that they have accurate facts on which to formulate a question for the state during its review. In addition, Ms Dairiam pointed out that CEDAW protects against exploitation of prostitution and therefore, it was important to pinpoint the nature of the right violated—for example, prostitution that is forced, subject to theft by others or police harassment of prostitutes.

Annex 4: IWRAW Asia Pacific Website

New Sections of the Website

- Information on CEDAW and other human rights instruments (international and regional) This includes text of the conventions, ratifications, general comments, information on the treaty body, decisions of the treaty body, updates and alerts on sessions and explanatory notes on the instrument, treaty body, procedural information and substantive aspects covered by each treaty.
- Collation of/Links to CEDAW text and other related information/materials such as in various languages (if available).
- Substantive and value added information such as commentaries and in depth explanatory notes will be primarily on CEDAW and women's human rights.
- Thematic treatment of women's human rights
- CEDAW related case laws: case law from the region which enumerate on
- Model laws and policies
- CEDAW implementation case studies (potential best practices) and updates on current issues and campaigns as a learning and networking platform for common issues within the region and globally.
- Mapping of discriminatory laws and positive laws which promote equality and non discrimination (Southeast Asia, South Asia and globally)
- Articles and papers (developed by IWRAW Asia Pacific) dealing with substantive, thematic and procedural aspects of women's human rights.
- Links to articles and papers on the internet dealing with substantive, thematic and procedural aspects of women's human rights.
- Tracking, analysis and moderation of discussion of IWRAW Asia Pacific's 2 listservs global2local and cedaw4change and sharing of these discussions.
- The portal will clearly demarcate the author and source of knowledge and information, and feature UNIFEM CEDAW SEAP as the funder on the main page of the CEDAW SEA Knowledge Portal.

Website Usage/ Visit History for 2008 - Monthly Statistics



Statistics provided by the Web Hosting Control System, Exa Bytes Network Sdn Bhd,
<<http://www.exabytes.com.my>>

The top ten web-pages visited within the IWRAP Asia Pacific website in 2008 were:

1. Main Page </ <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/index.htm>>
2. CEDAW Convention < <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/convention.htm>>
3. About us <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus.htm>>
4. CEDAW Shadow Reports <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/shadow_reports.htm>
5. Inquiry Procedure under the Optional Protocol <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/protocol/inquiry.htm>>
6. CEDAW Committee Concluding Comments <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/committee/comments.htm>>
7. Resources <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources.htm>>
8. CEDAW Committee <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/committee.htm>>
9. About us: Opportunities <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/about us/opportunities.htm>>
10. News <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/newss.htm>>