



Upcoming Events



- 56th Session on CSW: February 26 - March 9
- CSW Side Event at Fordham University: "Empowering Rural Women of All Ages," on March 3 from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
- CSW Side Event with the Mission of Sri Lanka at the United Nations: "Rural Women Think Green And Act Green," on March 5 from 1:15 p.m. -2:30 p.m.
- CSW Side Event with the "NGO Health Committee: Rural Communities: Health Workforce for Women," on March 6th from 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- CSW Side Event at Church Center: "Ensuring The Culture of Peace With the Empowerment of Women," on March 7 from 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- Rio+20 Summit, Brazil June 20-22, 2012

President's Message:

"Rural Women: The Essence of Life"

The International Health Awareness Network (IHAN), a non-governmental organization affiliated with ECOSOC and the Department of Public Information, supports the theme that the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will consider, "the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges." In developing countries, women are at the forefront of agriculture. IHAN is committed to promoting this theme through education, advocacy, and partnerships with rural women and other organizations to establish centers that will provide specific tools needed to enable the advancement of women.

The role of rural women is not solely limited to the normatively accepted generic position in society. Rural women today not only uphold the position as household laborers, but also take on the responsibilities outside family life. Women in the rural sphere partake in paid and un-paid agricultural and agro-industrial work. These women carry out different tasks in their communities such as: entrepreneurs, traders and providers of services. Women in some communities become leaders through advocacy work and raising awareness about the issues affecting them. Bearing in mind the myriad tasks encountered by rural women, their access to work and education is crucial for sustainable development. Addressing these needs can bring many benefits to the community, however they have not yet been fulfilled.

Many of the challenges that women face are directly linked to the economic, social, financial and trade-based trends that result from government policy at national and international levels. Yet policy is not the only barrier, living in remote areas also limits women. Demographic surroundings determine the accessibility that inhabitants will have; therefore, immediate environment plays an uncontrollable and mostly unfortunate restrictive role, which decreases rural women's access to technology, health care and the market. Traditional and cultural practices can also hinder the promotion and advancement of women.

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President's Message Continued

Certain practices call upon the prevention of women from seeking greater freedoms and social interactions. The lack of education reaffirms that women are excluded from enhancing their social and economic contributions. Illiteracy decreases a woman's ability in decision making processes; therefore, hindering the full and equal participation of women in their society.

IHAN deplores the fact that a lack of education may lead women into a poverty trap. Research shows that the alleviation of poverty serves to help the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals. Rural women, who cultivate about half of the world's food, do not own the land where they work. Their lack of participation in the economic sphere makes it increasingly difficult to obtain financial credit and loans. Women are underemployed and under paid everywhere. IHAN calls upon governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to be the agents for empowering rural women.

For the last 25 years, IHAN has been working with rural women through field projects on health and education. Empowering these women means to preserve values, traditions, entire cultures, our planet and its resources. IHAN believes that the creation of resource centers, specifically designed to address local needs, would strengthen women's involvement in the community.

The local resource centers could provide education through donated books, the Internet, and through the interactions encountered with others. They would also be used to teach art, music, storytelling and culture. IHAN recommends the creation of a college credit program, where student volunteers would assist those with literacy needs, by familiarizing the rural women with the devices provided in the center. This translates into further education, because by teaching women how to use tools such as the Internet, women can be empowered to continue learning on their own.

Technology would not be limited to computers and the Internet. Recycled cell phones would facilitate transportation, communication, and would provide women with access to mobility. The access to cellular devices would save time, money, and energy. Women would be able to call transportation to go to cities or places where they need to find things for household work. Calls could be made to ensure that routes to these places are working as expected and are safe. With the Internet and cellular devices, women that work on the farms are able to know when climate change will affect crops as well as take preventive action in communicating with others or preparing alone.

Recognizing that not all women participate in paid work and that many communities raise a child collectively, the resource centers could create a day care program. Mothers along with their children could spend time at the center. The program would directly help mothers as well as the community.

Coping with hardships could also be a product of interaction within these centers. Many women face tragic experiences due to unfortunate living conditions and never receive physical and more importantly emotional support. These centers would unite women from close proximities that are most likely to share similar experiences. Conversation and interaction could also lead to women becoming empowered to speak out on the issues of the community.

Women face multiple challenges, ranging from supporting the household, childcare, to fear of violence both near and away from home. Cultural, societal, and national reasons can be tied to the acts of violence, but securing its end is more difficult to determine. An environment that is secure allows for growth and prosperity. These local centers will provide women with support and strength to realize their potentials and be the agents of change. Realizing their potential will spark feelings of self-sufficiency and thus, allow for empowerment of the self to run its course.



UN DPI/NGO CONFERENCE URGES: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

By, Donn Carlson

BONN, Germany - Participants at an annual conference sponsored by the United Nations Department of Public Information and the Executive Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations have called on governments to adopt a series of sustainable development goals.

Held here at the Hotel Maritim conference center 3-5 September, the event attracted some 2,000 participants who met under the theme, "Sustainable Societies: Responsive Citizens."

Closely coupled to the theme of sustainable development was that of volunteerism and two upcoming volunteer-focused sessions of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 5 December 2011 that will mark the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers.

The conference also served to "inform the preparatory process" for a UN Conference on Sustainable Development, better known as RIO + 20, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, 3-5 June 2012.

Approved during the closing plenary session was a draft declaration which was presented to Christiane Bogemann-Hagedorn, a representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, the host country, for probable submission to the UN General Assembly in the weeks ahead.

Among other pleas cited in the document was one urging the creation of Millennium Consumption Goals, tied to sustainable development, that will help ensure quality of life and well-being of all people by 2020 while eradicating all kinds and levels of poverty.

Nations and populations engaged in wasteful overconsumption were implored to reduce their impacts and "help increase the consumption of vital goods and services for impoverished nations and peoples so they can enjoy ... equitable access to health care, decent work opportunities and education."

Other highlights of the document included a call for the creation of an International Environmental Court, strengthening of domestic judiciaries to deal with environmental disputes and stronger national and international environmental laws.

The establishment of Ombudspersons for Future Generations at global, national and local levels "to enhance the well-being and prospects of present and future generations to meet their needs" was encouraged as well. Such positions would serve as auditors and deal with citizen complaints.

The declaration proposed strengthening existing bodies of the United Nations Environmental Programme and upgrading UNEP to a higher status within the UN system.

References to peace as a precondition for sustainable development appeared throughout the 15-page document, often in connection with volunteerism.

Felix Dodds, chair of the 64th annual conference, told the participants during the closing that "the future does not belong to those who are timid or indifferent... We need responsive citizens to recognize that there is no Planet B or Plan B."

Quoting from a speech in the U.S. Senate by the late Robert F. Kennedy, he added:

"A revolution is coming -- a revolution which will be peaceful if we are wise enough; compassionate if we care enough; successful if we are fortunate enough -- but a revolution which is coming whether we will it or not. We can affect its character; we cannot alter its inevitability."



NGO Workshop Summary: **Volunteerism: Intergenerational Opportunities for a Sustainable Future** By, Natalia Saavedra

This NGO Workshop was moderated by **Dr. Sorosh Roshan** (New York), President of the International Health Awareness Network - IHAN; Panelists included **Dr. Suzanne Stutman** (New York), Representative for IHAN; **Dr. Martha Bial** (New York), Representative for the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics; **Dr. Scott Carlin** (New York), Representative for the International Society of Doctors for the Environment, **Leanne Barrineau** (New York), Representative for IHAN; **Natalia Saavedra** (Colombia), Representative for Peace Action

The NGO Workshop began by highlighting the work of NGOs and the important role they must play in raising awareness about the work of the United Nations and the Department of Public Information. **Dr. Roshan** emphasized that “giving is receiving.” She spoke about the importance of intergenerational links bridging the divides between youth and elders. The workshop consisted of five presentations, ranging from poetry to presentations that explained how intergenerational relationships gave dividends to a sustainable society and how governments can support responsive citizens. Key points covered included the benefits of volunteerism, first hand experience, and how volunteerism creates more sustainable societies.

During the question and answer period some members of the audience shared their reasons for having a passion for volunteering. One member of the audience noted that although volunteerism takes place locally, volunteers nurture certain needs in society that affect the entire world.

Members of the audience spoke about the need for a template or protocol for volunteer activity. Sometimes, volunteers must be educated in specific fields before they can volunteer their time. A member of the audience expressed her desire for the creation of guidelines that can facilitate this process, because she felt a volunteer should never be turned away. This also led to a discussion of how volunteer work must never replace labor.

In conclusion, members of the audience reiterated the importance of viewing volunteerism through a cultural lens, since geographically, this activity changes and culture can play a big role in defining the concept of volunteerism.



THE LIGHT MILLENNIUM PROGRAM ON GENDER EQUALITY & EMPOWERING WOMEN

Leanne Barrineau

Celebrating its 11th Anniversary, The Light Millennium held a panel discussion on Monday, November 14th, 2011 at Stevens Institute of Technology in collaboration with the College of Arts and Letters. The evening's discussion, entitled "Gender Equality and Empowering Women: Minority Rights and Discrimination," lasted well past its intended duration thanks to the powerful presentations by the esteemed panel members and keynote speakers. Their talks provoked a lively Q&A session that kept students, faculty, politicians, and members of civil society in their seats participating long into the evening.

The opening remarks given by Professor Lisa M. Dolling, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters, set the stage with her clear point of view on the importance of this event and the efforts of those who made it possible. She was followed by the Associate Dean, Professor Edward Foster, who also acted as moderator for the evening's program.

Joining the panelists was Dr. Palitha T.B. Kohona, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations. He provided a look into Sri Lanka's progress towards gender equality and eliminating violence against women. From Sri Lanka's history of women in power long before other western countries (citing the world's first elected woman Prime Minister in 1960, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike) to Sri Lanka's ratification of CEDAW (*the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*) as far back as 1981, to the introduction of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act in 2005, the integration of the MDGs into the national development agenda, and citing the 2010 statistics that show female adult literacy rates at 97% compared with their male counterparts at 98%, he ended by stating that "Sri Lanka has achieved much in ensuring equality of opportunity for girls and women. But we will not rest on our laurels."

Keynote speakers were followed by the panelists Joycelyn Gill-Campbell (Organizational Coordinator of Domestic Workers United), Professor Surendra Kaushik (founder of Kaushik Women's College in India), our very own Dr. Sorosh Roshan (president of IHAN), and Ms. Bircan Ünver (president of The Light Millennium).

Dr. Roshan gave a universal yet pointed perspective on the state of women's development worldwide. She remarked that while we have made significant developments and achieved great advances, gender equality was not one of them. To illustrate the point, she discussed women's suffrage of ill health, violent acts towards women, harmful cultural and traditional practices, and a discrimination against girls that (in her point of view as an obstetrician) begins before birth. Challenging the listeners, she asked, "what concrete steps can we implement that will ensure that we won't still be talking about gender equality another hundred years from now?" Dr. Roshan included the importance of the effects gender inequality had on men, the necessity for the education of girls, and a call of duty for women with knowledge and skill to be placed in high-ranking decision-making roles. She emphasized that women must learn, grow and invest in their mental and physical health, and that self-pity and self-destructive behavior is not an option. "To compete in an environment, which are not so women friendly, we need to have more education, skills, knowledge, and healthier mind and body."

Concluding the panel discussion, Bircan Ünver, focused on the question of women as a minority and of being marginalized. She stated, "Women in the world only own 3% of the resources compared to men who own 97%. Therefore, in real terms, we are a minority."

Many animated discussions erupted out of the Q&A section that followed, including a debate regarding human trafficking, but none of them more lively than one student's carefully thought out proposed solution to population control via abortion (citing the practice of aborting fetuses in China known to be female). Dr. Roshan immediately responded by stating, "You took my breath away." With much care and consideration for this student's perspective, Dr. Roshan redirected the solution to population control away from abortion, to a more positive, attainable means...education.

Part of The Light Millennium's vision is to "aim at starting a dialogue and build cooperation among all peoples to elevate souls and minds for a greater humanity." The evening's program proved to be a great success to this vision.

The Hope of this World
By, Geoff Stutman

You are not one, you are two. The first is an internality, locked within your very self. It is the manners in which the self is affected by that beyond you.

The second is otherwise. It is that beyond the self, and yet it is still the self, for how could a self interpret or recognize that beyond it, without an internal mechanism to assist? The second is interpretation. It is association, and relatability. It is the medium between the self and the world.

Now, I must begin again.

How quickly does time dissolve before us, in our utopian college town? How easy is it for an hour, to become a day, to become a month? In my mind, I hold the exam next Thursday to be life's next checkpoint. The following Saturday is a party, and Wednesday is that essay. At this stage in our lives, the recipients of our thoughts and concerns are overwhelmingly local, and that's okay! Even if you follow the stock market, or are aware of the uprisings in the middle east; these things are not tangible within our minds: they are not real.

Again, that is okay.

As I get older, and my circumstances develop, the concerns of my twenty year old self will fade. I will no longer be a student, but perhaps an employee, or a father. Depending on how I relate and what I choose to associate with, the objectives toward which I throw myself will change.

And yet, no matter where life carries me, or you, or him, or her, there is a supreme, wondrous commonality that we will always share.

We are people. Humans. Men and women—on planet Earth, and we are all equally lost... and found.

I have never seen the Sudan, nor did I experience the holocaust, and never once have I gone to bed with an empty belly, unless I willed it to be so. But I know that there are people who have. And did. And do.

These are people. My association. Their lives are not my life. But they are. I am a citizen of this world, and they are too. And this, this overwhelming, powerful, incredible recognition, departs upon me a responsibility.

This world is not broken—it is in no need of fixing. It is whole, and alive, and beautiful. This is so... because of hope.

To know what hope is, however, we must first know what is hoped for...

Peace.

Comfort.

Happiness.

Health.

Love.

To all people, and all things.

And yet, in order for the hoped for to be received, it must be given.

Could the answer really be that simple?

Yes.

Give.

Volunteer.

Choose to dedicate yourself to this world, and the people within it.

Who knows? Perhaps the world will return your hope to you.



African Views is a non-profit organization. Through mediums such as radio programs, video reports, community projects, workshops, print media, conferences, written reports, and television, the organization has facilitated the learning, action, and discussion of pressing issues in the African Sphere. Along with these mediums, AV works closely with many professionals, other organizations, and entities that support the advocacy of a healthy and prosperous lifestyle for all. By using these resources and mediums AV has been able to encourage public debate, and generate awareness. Issues such as limitations to policy implementation and human and societal development are but a few of the many topics that have been addressed. Moreover, the organization serves as a database, providing credible sources of information and a stream of knowledge for those to not only educate themselves but also participate. African Views is a United States registered 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization with affiliates and chapters in countries around the world. African Views has collaborated with IHAN through the African Views Radio. Through four sessions *Women's Rights are Human Rights: Declaration of Human Rights; Building Women's Self Esteem from Childhood to Maturity; Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discriminations against Women (CEDAW); and The State of Schools and College Education in African Societies*; IHAN and African Views were able to discuss issues that are pertinent to women's health, education, and empowerment. By including speakers such as the IHAN Youth Group; Leyla Nikijou (LL.M. Human Rights) *Programme Associate, Int'l Law and Human Rights & Peace and Democracy Programmes for Parliamentarians for Global Action*; David Donat-Cattin (Ph. D, Law) *Senior Director, International Law and Human Rights Programme for Parliamentarians for Global Action*; and Dr. Surendra Kaushik *Host for African Views Radio*, listeners were able to understand these social problems better as well as participate by calling in. Due to the success of this show, IHAN is able to continue its radio involvement in a new radio program, Voices of Women, to be broadcasted starting February of 2012. Topics to be discussed will be social struggles such as, health, development, education, and media and other social restrictions. Along with this medium, IHAN has expanded its awareness through sites such as its site: IHAN.org, Facebook: IHAN (International Health Awareness Network), and Twitter: @IHANnews.

By Lila Benaissa

Upcoming Winter 2012 NGO Briefings Calendar

19 January:

"Culture of Peace: Amplifying the Unseen and Unheard Voices of Peace"

26 January:

In Observance of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust - 27 January

2 February:

"May I ask a Question, Madame High Commissioner for Human Rights?"

9 February:

Nations in Transition: The Role of Civil Society in Strengthening Institutions and Building Democracy" (as a follow-up to the 64th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference Final Declaration)

23 February:

Youth Orientation Programme

1 March:

"Crisis Mapping: How Satellite Imagery Analysis can benefit NGO humanitarian efforts"

8 March:

"Empower Rural Women - End Hunger and Poverty" (In Observance of International Women's Day)

15 March:

"Water for Cities: Responding to the Urban Challenge" (In Observance of World Water Day - 22 March and as a follow-up to the 63rd Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference

23 March:

(In Observance of the International Day of Remembrance to the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade - 25 March)

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The International Health Awareness Network is a non-for profit organization dedicated to improving the health and welfare of women and children, particularly in the developing countries.

Every year we adopt a cause related to our mandate--empowering through health and education--cooperating with other NGOs, and concerned citizens to make a small but important difference.

IHAN Publications

1. The Role of Women in World Peace and Role of Boys in Gender Equity.
2. The Impact of Health Care Policy and Practices on Women.
3. The Impact of Nutrition on Women's and Children's Health.
4. Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children.
5. New Millennium Strategies for Women's Health and Human Rights in the Work Place
6. Improving Women's Health Throughout the Life Span.
7. The Right To Information

With your help we can improve the lives of women and children in developing countries.

IHAN depends entirely on contributions of time and money to conduct its important work.

Please join our efforts as a volunteer to assist us in our fundraising and to participate in our health and education projects.

Your contributions are tax deductible.



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