



IOM International Organization for Migration

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IOM GENDER AND MIGRATION NEWS



Dear Colleagues,

This issue was meant to coincide with International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March. While it is regrettably late, it gives us the opportunity to review how IWD was commemorated around the world.

You may wonder why there is a special day devoted to women. Working for IOM provides you with some answers as half of its stakeholders are migrant women, indeed half of the humanity is made up of women. It is the one day throughout the year when special efforts are made to draw attention to the assets of and constraints faced by women.

Migrant women are sources of change and development. They are partners for peace and nation-building. But they need to be empowered to do so through capacity-building, education, and awareness-raising efforts by IOM and other entities.

Let us also not forget the IOM women. You will hopefully have read by now the various documents prepared by the WGGI for IWD. We tried to emphasise, on the one hand, the stark, brutal facts of some forms of violence against women while highlighting, on the other hand, the work of empowered IOM female staff wanting to contribute to alleviating human misery in emergencies. Your feedback is welcome.

The Working Group on Gender Issues

THE NEW WORKING GROUP ON GENDER ISSUES FOR 2005



Back row: Hind Kambal, Lea Matheson, Kerstin Lau, Damien Thuriaux, Dina Ionescu, Thomas Tourade

Middle row: Liliana Mircescu, Theodora Suter, Miki Berge, Ndioro Ndiaye, Elisa Tsakiri, Hasmig Schaeffer

Seated : Denise Glasscock, Sylvia Ekra, Karen May

Absent: Delbert Field, Sajith Gunaratne, Shabnam Mossaheb, Helen Nilsson, Yagana Tandja, Sybille Koenig, Kay Lee, Sofia Warttmann.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

AFRICA

IOM Addis Ababa

GFP Alem Brook reports:

International Women's Day will be commemorated in a traditional fashion, possibly with flowers for our women or a cake in their honour. We would like to share the story of a woman who portrays hope and inner strength. Please note that her story was also published on 17 December in a local newspaper to commemorate International Migrants' Day.

A better day

She is young, bright and full of energy. Yesterday she was fighting for her survival, today she has a different story. A few years ago, her only dream was to support herself and her family and now her aspirations have changed to supporting young unemployed women who face the trials she had a few years back.

Lemlem [real name withheld] comes from a nine-member family living on meager income. Being the first-born, all responsibilities fell on her shoulders. Having not fared well in her education and dropped out, she had no skills to secure a well-paid job. She found a way out when a friend offered to take her to Yemen. "I had never thought of leaving my country, family and friends", she remembers, "but then I had no choice at all and could not see another way out from the desperate situation my family and I were in. And when my friend came up with the idea I

was immediately convinced to go with her".

Lemlem had no money for processing the papers and buying a ticket for her trip. She had to borrow money from family and relatives. Once in Yemen, she joined her friend as a housemaid in a private home. She remembers the first three months as very difficult. She was new to the country's language, to the weather and the food. However, thanks to her good will, she was soon given a salary increment.

Difficulties continued however, as she faced harsh working conditions and long working hours. There were moments when she found it very difficult to keep going. She says she found much strength to continue going by remembering the people she left behind and the dire situation she had faced back home.

"I remained loyal to my dream and I was determined to make things work out for me and my family," Lemlem says, "so I didn't complain about the bad working conditions I faced. I remained obedient to my employers no matter what. This saved me from a lot of trouble."

During her three and half year stay in Yemen she was able to save some money and at the same time support her family. She also arranged for her five sisters to join her and continue supporting the rest of the family. Once she saw them settled she returned home with one more dream to fulfill - to assist young unemployed women who are in the same desperate situation she was a few years ago.

If she could turn back the clock, Lemlem would have left using legal channels. She says many of the Ethiopians she knew, including herself were illegal migrants and as a result faced many problems: those who left using legal channels were treated better.

"I was not treated the same as my Filipino colleague who had used a legally registered employment agency. She had all her rights protected, she was treated with much more respect and she enjoyed more freedom than I," she says.

On returning home, she worked towards her dream by opening an employment agency. The money she saved was not enough: to open the agency, she sought the financial assistance of her sisters.

"There are very limited job opportunities in this country. Many young people spend their days without doing anything useful as a result," she says. "I believe these people should go abroad, work and support themselves if the opportunity presents itself. I remember how I suffered before securing a job in Yemen...things would have been worse for me and my family had I not gone abroad for work."

Labour Migration: Facts and Figures

Orderly migration benefits society as a whole. On the other hand, the economic insecurity, lack of human rights, and other consequences of irregular migration, and especially of trafficking and smuggling, can be grave for individuals and societies:

□ Major factors that encourage young women and girls to migrate to other countries

are unemployment and poverty. Most of them see no future prospects to lead a normal and productive life locally and are forced to take any options even if it involves risks.

□ Out of a sample of 443 migrant workers residing in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen, only one-tenth followed the formal and legal process while most of the female migrants were illegally recruited through brokers.

□ Lebanon has the highest percentage of trafficked women and children (81 per cent), followed by Yemen with 68.9 percent. Saudi Arabia has the lowest percentage with 34.2 per cent of trafficked women. In the case of Egypt, 50 percent of the respondents were trafficked.

□ It is estimated that more than 20,000 Ethiopians are working in Lebanon alone. The average monthly salary of a domestic worker is 100 USD. A conservative estimate is that they send at least 50 per cent of their salaries home. Based on this assumption it can be estimated that over 1.2 million USD are remitted by domestic workers living in Lebanon alone.

Source: Assessment of the Magnitude of Women and Children Trafficked within and outside of Ethiopia, April 2004. (IOM)

IOM Addis Ababa is currently working with Lemlem's and other private employment agencies by providing legal, psychosocial, health and financial counseling services and orientation to young migrant workers bound for the Middle East.

MRF Dakar

GFPs Madani Hane and Abibatou Wane report:

Exposition de Femmes au Musée de l'IFAN à Dakar : « Halte aux violences faites aux Femmes ! »

Une vingtaine de femmes ont pris part à une exposition organisée au Musée de l'IFAN, au mois de février sous le thème « Halte aux violences faites aux femmes ! » à Dakar (au Sénégal) afin de sensibiliser et d'exhorter les autorités du pays à prendre des dispositions législatives pour mettre fin à la violence contre les femmes.

L'exposition a surtout été marquée par des toiles aux couleurs multiformes et des sculptures de grande facture où les séquelles de l'excision, les violences dont sont victimes les femmes émergent à travers les œuvres.

Malgré cette violence, ces femmes artistes affichent un grand espoir. Selon Fatou Kine Diakhate, « la violence contre les femmes est vécue quotidiennement partout, dans le quartier, dans le voisinage et dans les foyers. »

L'exposition dans le musée de l'IFAN a surtout été une occasion pour ces femmes artistes de s'unir et de peindre la douleur et les souffrances des femmes face à cette violence qu'elles en méritent pas.

Les femmes artistes n'ont pas hésité à dénoncer à travers leurs œuvres l'injustice faite aux femmes qui, le plus souvent n'ont d'autre recours que de se taire.

Les couleurs et les formes ont aussi laissé entrevoir les larmes que toutes les femmes

maltraitées versent souvent toutes seules et sans aucune défense. Toutefois les autorités du pays ont été sensibilisées longuement par toutes ces femmes venues des quatre coins du globe. En effet, il y avait outre la présence de femmes artistes du Sénégal, celle d'artistes venues de la Colombie, du Chili, de la Gambie.

L'exposition organisée en collaboration avec Amnesty International sera ouverte au public jusqu'au 11 mars 2005 pour permettre au public de mieux s'imprégner des dures réalités que traversent les femmes en proie à la violence.

IOM Ghana

GFP Cecilia Omole reports :

International Women's Day March

International Women's Day is an occasion marked by women's groups around the world. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday. When women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, come together to celebrate their Day, they can look back to a tradition that represents at least nine decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development.

However, in Ghana it is not a national holiday but this year was different since it coincided with the first working day after Independence Day which, in Ghana, is declared a national holiday.

The Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE) chose to mark this special day with an open house event to celebrate womanhood and getting women

to know more about this special day set aside for women. The event offered women, children and even men an opportunity to enjoy the day with lots of exciting activities and services.

All the services from the service providers were given for free to participants. Food and drinks, bought by WISE, were also free. Some of the services provided were: beauty tips, medical care, eye and dental care, massage, hair dressing, facials, manicure and many more. Music was also provided and participants danced to their satisfaction.

Everyone who attended the event enjoyed at least three of the services that were provided. The masseur alone attended to more than five people, about 50 people had a manicure and pedicure, the dentist attended to over 60 people and the eye specialist with his team attended to over 90 people. The rest of the service providers could not keep a record of the number of people they attended to because there were so many people.

One of the participants said in an interview with GTV that, it was very thoughtful of WISE to organize such an event on International Women's Day that involved women, children and even men; coming together, spending time together, and having all these services for free. She also commended WISE for all the wonderful and beneficial services it provided to the community.

WISE takes pride in empowering all women and making them feel proud of women- and motherhood.

Cecilia also shares this piece:

WISE: WOMEN'S INITIATIVE for SELF-EMPOWERMENT.

Violet E. Awotwi
Executive Director & Founder

HISTORY:

WISE - Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE) was established in 1999 to respond to the increase in reports of violence against women and children, limited public awareness of and collaboration among the few organizations set up to provide services, and the lack of counseling and support programs to meet the psychological needs of survivors of violence. To meet needs not addressed by existing services, WISE has provided individual and group counseling services for survivors of violence and training in counseling and support for direct service providers. WISE recently set up the WISE Wellness Center in Accra to provide survivors of violence with counseling, medical, legal and social services.

MISSION:

Provide holistic and sustainable support services to women and children survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault; education to the public-at-large; advocacy with critical stakeholders; and training to service providers on the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault.

VISION :

WISE is also committed to providing the space for survivors to speak their truths and be heard with respect and without bias. WISE provides counseling and support services to women and children survivors of violence. Our vision is to break the cycle of violence and sexual assault for

women and children. We work in cooperation with our partners and clients to develop culture-specific and community-based solutions.

WISE Staff and Volunteers - An amazing, passionate, insightful and committed group of individuals. Their dedication and support is the foundation on which WISE solidly stands.

Our dedicated donor partners - organizations and individuals - whose trust, vision and investment have ensured the smooth operations of WISE through the years.

Our community Partners - To have partners who will say yes, in spite of their relentless volume of work - is to be surrounded by angels. Our partners have been on the frontline with us, supporting, championing and leading.

In consultation with UNHCR, WISE developed a three and half year collaborative programme to strengthen refugee protection and assistance in Ghana. The main reason for this multi-year approach is to have a sustained approach in meeting the protection needs of the refugees and to avoid hasty short-lived projects which may disrupt the already uprooted refugee communities. The project cycle is therefore projected from 2004 to 2007.

Key Issues for Advocacy

There is inadequate focus in the following areas:

- Clear policies and targeted resources from government and private sector for prevention and intervention;
- Multidisciplinary approach to counseling and support services at the community level;
- Prevention education and training to strengthen

comprehensive support and care for survivors;

- Change in public perceptions of violence against women and children;
- Involvement of boys and men in the fight for safety of women and children.

Resource Gap

While government and non-government organizations are relentlessly trying to maximize existing resources, limitations remain:

- Scarcity of counseling, psycho-educational training and support programmes for survivors of violence;
- Social Welfare Department under resourced and overwhelmed;
- Acute shortage in shelters for battered women and children;
- Victims often undergo re-traumatization by institutions and agencies set up to help them;
- Services are based primarily in Accra;
- Desperate need for alternative housing for survivors;
- Need for qualified/certified child psychologists in the country;
- Counselors and psychologists stretched to limit;
- Poverty and abuse often collide to increase burden on survivors and service providers;
- Need for aggressive campaigns that target and include men and boys.

For more information on the work WISE is doing in Ghana please contact their website at: www.wise-up.org

MRF Nairobi

GFP Consolata Kimata reports:

Every year, MRF Nairobi upholds International Women's Day with honour. This is because we are all born and raised by women of integrity and grace.

This year, MRF Nairobi saw yet again both men and women from each department volunteer to be a member of the Gender Working Group (GWG). The new Gender Focal Point, Consolata Kimata, was selected to succeed our long-serving focal point Timnit Embaye. The members at the MRF Nairobi (urban) office of the team are Lillian Omanyoo, Lucy Ndirangu, Carey Karani, Isaac Munyae, George Wachiuri, Phosia Suleiman, Abel Konganga and Dr. Patricia Mburu. We also have a sub-office at the refugee camp in northern Kenya, IOM Kakuma where John Walburn and Zulekha Ahmed represent us.

Activities at Sub-Office IOM Kakuma

IOM Kakuma was very active on this eventful day in joint activities with other Humanitarian Agencies at the Kakuma refugee camp. The celebrations at the camp began on 28 February and lasted until 8 March. Each refugee community participated in various activities such as short skits, cultural dances, displays in the craft fairs, sporting events with girl teams. The Publicity team (comprising one representative from each agency) made posters and fliers that represent various themes that the women want to express such as, gender equality, female genital mutilation, early marriage, girl

child education and many others.

Honoured guests from the Kenya Women's Parliamentary Group and the Sudanese Women's Leadership in Nairobi were invited. Certificates of achievements were given to persons who had assisted in moulding the character of the community and the positive cultural practices. This includes community leaders in support of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Programme, Adult Education, Women's Leadership in the communities, the Head Teacher with the highest number of female pupils, those who had encouraged Special Education for the disabled, the best student, the best parent, the best couple and many more. To crown the celebrations, each agency nominated a staff member who has spearheaded the Rights of Women in that Organization



Winners of Year 2004 best dressed male (George-left) & best dressed female (Habiba-middle)

IWD has always been a very colourful day with all staff adorned in a variety of authentic traditional attire. As a way of promoting development and security in our country, we felt this could be achieved through global Cultural Orientation. All employees would wear authentic traditional attire of any country of

his/her choice from across borders and oceans. Each person should know about the culture of the nation or tribe they were representing. There was a prize for the best male and female attirement. Display boards had pin-ups of photographs and articles of women who had been and are role models in our societies globally. The events for the day were held in the afternoon and began with a speech by the Regional Representative, Mr. Edwin McClain. We had an IOM Consultant, Professor Violet Kimani, give a talk related to the theme of the year. We have a transit centre in Nairobi where refugees are accommodated prior to their departure for the respective countries of resettlement. Our HIV/AIDS Counselor, Rosalind Kariuki, gave a talk to refugees at the centre. There were also persons who took part in an essay competition where the best three were read out and the writers awarded. There was a play by the employees. During this day we also took the opportunity to thank last year's Gender Working Group and welcome the incoming group.

THE AMERICAS

IOM Bogota

THE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN JOINS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION IN COLOMBIA.

*by Juan Sánchez
Press and Communications
Coordinator at IOM Bogotá's
Counter-trafficking programme
IOM Colombia*



The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) launched on 25 November 2004 in Bogotá, joins forces with the organisers of International Women's Day.

This men-to-men campaign against any type of violence against women is an initiative promoted by male staff at IOM and UN agencies. The aim is to enrol other men inside and outside IOM and the UN system under the slogan "*Del TIPO que sea, NO a la violencia contra las Mujeres*" (No matter the type – say no to the violence against women).

In this way, the idea is that men shall not accept or commit any type of violence against women, no matter if it's physical, psychological, or any other type of violence without distinction to religion, race, sexual preferences, or any other condition.

On 8 March, the WRC created a mass media campaign in order to inform and raise male awareness to violence against women and how men can work to eliminate it in the Beijing + 10 conference context. The message will be distributed by IOM and the UN system to male staff in Colombia in general and journalists in particular, thereby transmitting the message to the male population throughout the country.

This year's message will be focused on the Colombian rate of violence and trafficking in persons as one of the worst kind of violence against women; because it deprives them of all their benefits and freedom. Also, the victims of trafficking are taken away from their environment (home, town, city, family, friends) and they are mistreated by the worst type of exploitation.

It is very important to mention the work on discriminating against HIV/AIDS positive women.

This is why the White Ribbon Campaign exists: To work towards the elimination of violence against women; to not tolerate any violence against women; to transmit this non-violence message to other men; to create a critical mass against all types of violence occurring in Colombia.

Del TIPO que sea NO a violencia contra las Mujeres.

MRF WASHINGTON

GFP Berta Fernandez reports:

UN inter-agency meeting organized by the Latin America and Caribbean Section of UNIFEM in New York

On 3 March, the Latin America and Caribbean Section of UNIFEM in New York organized an informal UN inter-agency meeting to exchange experiences on gender and migration, as well as identify a strategy for promoting the rights and participation of migrant women in the region. It was a brainstorming session in which programmatic experiences were

shared, priorities on gender and migration and the possibility of developing a joint agenda were discussed. UNIFEM Asia Migration Project Director gave presentations on their experience under way in Asia and the Pacific. Berta Fernandez (MRF Washington) participated in the meeting and made a presentation on IOM's programmes in the Hemisphere.

**Play co-sponsored by the
Embassy of Nicaragua and
IOM**

The theatre play "The Immigrant" ("El Nica" is the original Spanish title) was staged on 3 March in a private showing co-sponsored by MRF Washington and the Embassy of Nicaragua. This widely acclaimed monologue captures the integration barriers male immigrants have to face as foreign labour workers, including the emotional isolation from their loved ones. By wandering through several moods as he remembers the injustices he had to confront, Carlos Melendez superbly performs the traditional masculine role that the Nicaraguan immigrant (living in Costa Rica). These range from feelings of insecurity and depression associated with the realities of migration, very different than the one he had hoped for. The Regional Representative, Fran Sullivan and the Nicaraguan Ambassador, Mr. Stadthagen made opening remarks. A reception followed. IOM invited the following counterparts: PRM, US Dept of Labor, USAID, IADB, World Bank, PAHO, and OAS. Media invited included The Washington Post, Univision Network TV, Spanish language Channel 47, and EFE.

**Panel on Trafficking in
Women Sponsored by
Amnesty International and
UNIFEM-USA**

In celebration of International Women's Day, the Mid-Atlantic Office of Amnesty International, the National Capitol Chapter of UNIFEM-USA and the DC-Women's Human Rights Action Team co-sponsored a panel discussing Trafficking in Women on 8 March. As part of this event, the film "The Peacekeepers and the Women" was shown. This film addresses the work of the United Nations on trafficking in Bosnia and Kosovo. The purpose of the event was to not only educate the audience on the links between trafficking, violence against women, and human rights, but also to motivate them to act by giving them specific ideas for action. Ashley Garrett (MRF Washington) participated as a panelist. Her intervention focused on what international organizations and NGOs were doing to respond to the issue and how ordinary people could become involved.

***IOM and CIM/OAS Regional
Caribbean Counter-trafficking
Meeting***

From 14-16 March roughly 36 Governmental and non-governmental representatives from the Caribbean region will gather for three days in Washington DC to discuss:

- Day 1 - Scope and Nature of Trafficking in persons in the Caribbean
- Day 2 - Taking Action: Developing National and Regional Responses in the Caribbean

- Day 3 – Next Steps: Developing a Caribbean Regional Plan of Action
A gendered perspective will be included in the discussions.

The main aim of the seminar is to stimulate regional cooperation and information sharing. Specifically, a Caribbean Regional Research Report which provides analysis on the situation of trafficking in persons within The Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, The Netherlands Antilles, St. Lucia and Suriname will be presented. It will bring together various individuals who are leading their country's efforts in addressing trafficking in persons. In addition, representatives of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Japan and Spain, local non-governmental organizations and international organizations such as CARICOM, ILO, PAHO, UNHCR, OECS, CDB, IDB, and the European Union were also invited.

This Regional Seminar is made possible through the support of the US State Department, Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration and the Ministry of Justice of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as part of a joint *Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children* in seven Caribbean countries (Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, the Netherlands Antilles, Saint Lucia, and Suriname).

ASIA

MRF Dhaka

GFP Lucy Riffat Hossein reports:

Observance of International Women's Day

IOM Dhaka celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) throughout the week.

On **6 March** IOM organized a sensitizing workshop in Narshindhi on the issue of female migrant workers in the country supporting BOMSA, a leading organization in the field. Consequences of unsafe migration and preparation of the women for safe migration was discussed by the IOM GFP. The event was enriched by the experience sharing of some of the suffering returnees. The District Commissioner presided as chief guest and representatives from Ministry of women and Child affairs and civil society were present.

IOM participated with the Government of Bangladesh in the afternoon of **8 March** in a grand Road March event, where participation of the different women's organizations all over the country made the event a great success. The theme was 'Stop Violence against Women'. This Road March was a final event centrally organized which is a follow up of 38 road march organized earlier (18 in 2003 and 20 in 2004) in districts of Bangladesh to build mass awareness for stopping violence against women and girls and for combating human trafficking in the country. Community people, police, journalists, local administration, professionals and NGO activists were targeted for the programme. Trafficking was identified as the worst form of violence against women

according to the chairperson, The Honorable Minister for Women and Child Affairs (MOWCA), Ms Khurshid Jahan Haque. The Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs was also present to grace the occasion. Representatives from IOM, AED, and USAID were also present. Plays were organized on the horrific consequences of trafficking. Banners, posters and festoons were displayed reflecting the dangers of trafficking.

During the earlier part of the same day, IOM participated in an exhibition organized by the Khan Foundation, an organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations at the Millennium University Campus, Dhaka. The title of the event was "A way forward for Women".

IOM participated in the exhibition during the UN's joint celebration of IWD with other UN agencies working in Bangladesh on **9 March**. The exhibition reflected what IOM is doing in Bangladesh in mainstreaming gender in its activities and programmes. IOM's publications such as newsletters, flyers, posters or any other advocacy materials were displayed and a video on trafficking of women was on show. It helped demonstrate IOM as a partner in gender mainstreaming.

An article written by the GFP on the history of women's day was published in a popular daily newspaper.

Direct participation and supervision in all the events were ensured by IOM staff.

IOM Hanoi

GFP Noortje Verhart reports:

Transforming Vietnamese women's roles for the XXI century

The UN Gender Working Group in Vietnam organized a panel discussion about the changing roles of Vietnamese women in the 21st century on International Women's day. One of the main reasons was the changing Vietnamese context, especially over the last ten years. The phase of rebuilding the country is over. Economic development is accelerating and Vietnam is integrating into the world. The panel discussion looked at the challenges that the Vietnamese women are facing and showed that these are very different from those of the 20th century. The 21st century opens up a world of information, high technology, huge opportunities and risks. It is now time for Vietnamese women to decide themselves where to go so that they can progress and participate in the economic developments.

There is a need for women to look back at their traditional roles to see if they are still relevant, suitable and affordable for them to advance. In order to be able to do this, there is a need for a forum in which this can be discussed. This forum should include several representatives of the Vietnamese society in order to be in line with the Vietnamese context (government, party, society), and personal wishes, including the family and the community. The panel discussion start the discussion to set up such a forum by reviewing the transformation of perceptions and the understanding and attitudes toward the roles of Vietnamese women in this new perspective. The event was also used to

reinforce the implementation of the Convention on Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Vietnam.

The UN Gender Working Group, in cooperation with UNFEM, was the main organizer. Guest speakers in the panel came from the Vietnam Women's Union, Research institutes and International Organizations. The Vietnam Women's Union made their meeting room available. Furthermore 40 participants from international organizations, NGO's, ministries and local press were present. IOM has been part of the UN gender working group for many years and participated in the organization of this event.

IOM Dushanbe

GFP Nigina Mamadjanova reports on an exhibition set up for IWD:

Tajikistan - on the Way to Gender Equality: Economic Empowerment of Women

The International Year of Micro-credit 2005

Building Inclusive Financial Sectors to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals

International Women's Day should not just be an occasion for giving flowers to women, but should be a day of reflection and activism for all members of society on the constant commitment that will be required by government and civil society to reach the ultimate goal of women's

empowerment and participation in all aspects of public life.

The Gender Theme Group which consists of gender focal points from UN agencies, international organizations and bilateral donors¹ had been established in 2003 in response to strengthening the cooperation and coordination of efforts for gender equality, and to lead and support the gender mainstreaming process. It is obvious that the Theme Group is in a good position to play a major advocacy role around internationally recognized days such as International Women's Day and International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. In 2004, the Theme Group facilitated a special meeting of the UN press-club focused on presentations made by UNIFEM Projects on land rights and UNDP micro-credit projects whose main beneficiaries are rural women. Participants of the press-club recommended continuing this practice and focusing on raising awareness on positive micro-finance services' experience among potential partners: the Government, donors, and potential beneficiaries.

In response to this recommendation, the Gender Theme Group agreed to launch a special event on International Women's Day focusing on economic empowerment of women via micro-credits and microfinance activities. This event coincides with the International Year of Micro-credit 2005 endorsed by UN

¹ UNDP, UNICEF, WB, OSCE, CARE, SCO, OXFAM, UNHCR, UNIFEM, FAO, WFP, UNTOP, IOM, ABA/CEELI, EU Delegation, USAID, OSI, UNODC, AKHP

General Assembly Resolution 53/197 of 15 December 1998. The event is considered as an effort to focus attention on the status of women in society and the importance of economic empowerment of women as a means towards achieving gender equality. Simultaneously, this event will advocate for the reliability of microfinance clients – women - in repaying loans, managing household incomes, building assets and enterprises thus contributing to the local economy.

Objective:

This event aimed at raising awareness on the importance of the economic empowerment of women and reliability of women as microfinance clients.

Activities:

- organization of exhibition of the goods produced by women involved in microcredit projects;
- demonstration of the clothes produced by the fund of handcrafters "Khaft Paikar";
- showing a film on micro-credit projects;
- organization of a charitable lottery to support an orphanage in Temur Malik (100 children);
- organization of the competition on best products.

"By directly empowering poor people, particularly women, microfinance has become one of the key driving mechanisms towards meeting the MDG's, specifically the overarching target of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015."

Quote from speech during the launch of the International Year of Micro-credit 2005

EUROPE

IOM Lisbon

GFP Magda Vieira reports:

The Commission for Equality and Woman's Rights (Comissão para a Igualdade e para os Direitos da Mulher - CIDM) is promoting a debate/conference on *"The Beijing Platform for Action and the objectives of the Millennium Declaration as an instrument for the development of equality in the XXI Century"*.

Ten years after the Beijing Platform for Action, CIDM intends to reevaluate the objectives of the Declaration and adjust them to the evolution of Portuguese society.

The programme also includes a debate on the role of Conferences that addressed Women's Issues in the promotion of gender equality in Portugal and around the world; statements of public and private participants in such conferences, in particular in the negotiation of the Beijing Declaration; a debate on the impact of the Beijing Platform for Action in promoting women's rights.

Another interesting initiative is the public presentation of the book *"Females in Dictionary - centuries XIX - XX"*. This dictionary aims at providing methodological data about the role of several women entrepreneurs in the transformation of legal, political, economic, and cultural conditions of women in the Portuguese society over the years.

All over the country other initiatives are being promoted by all municipalities, implying a recognition of the role played

by women in today's Portuguese society.

Here in the Mission we will keep it simple. Nevertheless to honour this day each member will bring a story to share about a woman he/she admires; made a difference in his/her life; inspired. This woman can be a real life heroine or a story-book person, an author of a book, a songwriter, a woman in a song, an activist or not, all except for the woman in our family (that would be too easy...). With this we hope to share stories and knowledge about women that are, were, or will always be an inspiration for us.

WGGI PEARLS



© Dina Ionescu

GENDER QUIZ

The answer to the question in the last issue of who said:

"The source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting and mingling of these two: man-life and

woman-life, man-knowledge and woman-knowledge, man-being and woman-being".

D. H. Lawrence
British poet & novelist
1885-1930

This issue's question is:

If there hadn't been women we'd still be squatting in a cave eating raw meat, because we made civilization in order to impress our girl friends. And they tolerated it and let us go ahead and play with our toys."

NEW LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

Oxfam GB, **Gender Equality and Men, Learning from Practice**, edited by Sandy Ruxton
2004

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