



March/April 2011

The past six weeks have seen four important events take place within the world of women's progress:

- The inauguration of **UN Women** on 24 February was a very special milestone: reports from our own **Lois Hainsworth** and **Monica Tolman**
- **CSW 55** 's theme was '*Education, Access to Science & Technology Training and decent Work for women and girls*': report on a rural Indian project to empower adolescent girls
- **Fairtrade Fortnight** ran from 28 February to 13 March : report from **Shared Interest**
- 8 March 2011 saw the **Centenary of International Women's Day**: report on closing the gender gap in agriculture.

These reports illustrate how varied is the work being done to empower women and girls globally.



UN Women

History was made on 24 February 2011 when the UN agency for women was finally launched. It had taken many years of effort and was the result of the amalgamation of four UN agencies which have all been dealing with the advancement of women: UNIFEM, DAW, INSTRAW and OSAGI.

The first of these was a result of a resolution made at the First UN Conference on Women, held in 1975 in Mexico, resulting from which in 1976 the General Assembly of the United Nations brought into being the first agency to deal solely with gender issues, UNIFEM, albeit with no direct funding from the UN and relying entirely upon voluntary contributions from Member States!

For the last three or four years it has been appreciated that there were persistent gaps in the matter of the access of women to education and health care, as well as the burning issues of violence and trafficking. There was much consultation on these problems and it was appreciated that a specific agency was needed for gender issues on a par with, for instance, UNICEF and UNDP, with adequate direct funding from the UN.

In July 2010 Ban Ki Moon announced that a new UN Agency, UN Women, would be brought into being and that its Director would hold the same rank as those of UNICEF and UNDP.

On 1 January UN Women began work with Michelle Bachelet, previously President of Chile, as its Director in the offices in the UNDP building previously used by UNIFEM and on 24 February 2011 UN Women was launched in New York at the Commission on the Status of Women with Michelle Bachelet.

In 1975 Bertha Bradby, the then Chairman of the ICW GB Committee of GB attended the Mexico UN Conference on Women and when she returned said that the best thing to come out of the conference was the formation of UNIFEM. Since then NCW GB has been a firm supporter of UNIFEM and many NCW members are also members of UNIFEM UK. It is therefore relevant to quote below the message

from UNIFEM UK to its members, which answers some of the questions posed at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

In the United Kingdom the existing membership of UNIFEM has been informed and the following information was given in its UNIFEM UK January 2011 e-Bulletin:

*“This is an historic time for us with the formation on 1 January 2011 of UN Women and the amalgamation of UNIFEM with three other gender related bodies into a cohesive new organisation. We are dedicated to supporting the work of UN Women in its mission for gender equality and the empowerment of women. After many years of lobbying by government and civil society and your national committee, we are delighted that we will be taking forward an effective agenda in support of the new organisation as the **UN Women National Committee for the UK**.*

“UN Women will be launched on 24 February 2011 in New York and we have been asked to wait until after this before undertaking any launch activity for the UN Women NC UK. However we are developing plans for announcements and events throughout 2011 and will work with the countless other campaigns supporting UN Women. Your subscriptions and donations allow us to support the vision values and activities of UN Women and its network of supporters and volunteers around the world in a practical way. You will remain an integral part of a group of dedicated women and men who want to offer hope and a new way forward to women and girls facing extreme deprivation and challenging circumstances. With your continued support UN Women NC UK will be able to grow and improve its effectiveness in promoting and assisting the vital work of UN Women.

*“The development of UN Women from its former parts is in transition and a strategic plan is being developed for the first part of 2011. We will keep you informed of progress through our regular e-bulletins and we are in the process of relaunching our website, currently still at **www.unifem.org**”*

Note: UNIFEM: UN Voluntary Fund for Women;

DAW: Division on the Advancement of Women;

INSTRAW: Research Institute for the Advancement of Women;

OSAGI: Office of the Special Adviser for Gender Issues.

As a long-standing member of NCW and UNIFEM I do hope that more NCW members will follow the progress of UN Women.

Lois Hainsworth MBE

(Hon. Vice-President NCWGB; Past Chairman Foreign Affairs Committee; Past President UNIFEM UK; currently Vice-Chairman Foreign Affairs Committee)



LAUNCH OF UN WOMEN in New York on 24th FEBRUARY 2011

CHAIR Juju Chang – This is the moment women across the world have worked for, it has been a long journey, women’s rights are human rights and the UN has a special role in the empowerment of women. Every woman has the right to live her life to the full.

SHORT FILM beginning with black and white picture of Eleanor Roosevelt speaking to the General Assembly of the UN in 1948, cutting to a young Hilary Clinton stating ‘women’s rights are human rights, human rights are women’s rights ONCE AND FOR ALL’

ADDRESS BY SECRETARY GENERAL BAN KI-MOON

We have established UN Women which was agreed unanimously in July 2010. The creation of UN Women will revitalize the UN. This year we celebrate 100 years of International

Women's Day. Women must receive equal power and rights in any and every respect. We cannot address our old problems without the full participation of women.

Tonight we celebrate and thank all who have made the creation of UN Women possible, including our NGO community partners. We are very proud that we have Michelle Bachelet as our founding Executive Director. This is part of an international drive to empower women and address Violence Against Women. Rape is a crime against humanity. We have already been pledged \$40K for women and children's health.

This is a time to remember why we worked so hard for women and girls, to give them access to health, education and equality in decision making. In this 100th Anniversary Year of International Women's Day UN Women takes us an important step in the right direction, it will help us bring children out of poverty and enforce peace and help us eliminate harmful traditional practices. UN Women is the right thing and the smart thing to do. I will support UN Women in every way I can as Secretary General with every ounce of my energy and time – and try to raise money for you too!

ADDRESS BY MICHELLE BACHELET,
(who was given a standing ovation)

It is a joy and honour to announce the launch of UN Women. It took 4 years of hard work to achieve and 4 months to set up after agreement had been given. Its creation reflects global concern with the slow pace of change. Neglect of women means half the potential of the human race is lost. It is not just morally right to give women their rights, it makes sound social and political sense too. There is no limit to what women can do. Women's rights are a universal issue which will help us achieve political stability, growing economies and faster progress.

UN Women offers new opportunities for dialogue and new energy – 2011 will be a turning point for a better world for all.

THERE FOLLOWED SHORT SPEECHES BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM NEPAL (which had just launched its Plan of Action for SCR 1325) and Nigeria -for far too long women's voices have not been heard and, memorably, 'can anyone run fast on only one foot? And 'women in positions are duty bound to advance other women'

Princess Christina of Spain spoke about women as key agents of change, she said if we invest in women we build strong communities, progress is terribly slow, especially in the area of maternal mortality.

Ted Turner (founder of CNN and former husband of Jane Fonda) bounced in and said **investment in women and girls was the best investment, all men should support it.**

Nicole Kidman appeared briefly on screen from California but the technology failed

Gina Davis (actress) spoke very confidently and strongly about women in the media and the stereotyping of women and girls. She said women were marginalized and invisible and that gender stereotyping was entrenched. She deplored the lack of good role models for girls. She said the stereotyping of girls also affected the way they were seen by boys. Her motto is 'if they can see it they can be it'

Shakira – a singer, talked about the Barefoot Campaign for poor girls.

An Indian Police Commander spoke about all-women police peace-keepers

The evening ended with the performance of a song especially composed for the occasion which featured a choir of girls in national costumes. The refrain of the song was

'WE ARE ONE WOMAN AND WE SHALL SHINE'

*(Report by **Monica Tolman**, immediate past-president, who attended and was deputising for **Sheila Eaton**, President NCWGB)*



An education programme empowers adolescent girls to thrive in rural India

CHANDRAPUR, India, 17 March 2011 – In some of India's most remote tribal areas, adolescent girls are finally being given the opportunity to thrive.

Traditionally, women in such areas marry young and often give birth to children when they are not physically or emotionally ready, at great danger to their own lives. But in at least one district, things are changing.

Anusaya, 14, lives in the village of Antapur in the district of Chandrapur, Maharashtra, central India. She is extremely shy but smiles easily. Until very recently, Anusaya spent her days at home cooking and cleaning, or in the fields, picking cotton under the hot sun to contribute to her family's meagre income. Today she plans to go back to school. It's a complete turnaround from a few months ago when her parents started to plan her marriage. At that point, Anusaya had already been out of school for two years.

Return to school: **Rukma**, 24, is a 'prerika', or volunteer facilitator, at the local Deepshikha adolescent girls' group. **The Deepshikha programme** works to educate and empower girls and ensure their increased participation in decision making that affects them. When she came across Anusaya crying out of fear about her impending marriage, **Rukma** decided to speak with her parents. Anusaya's parents had married young, and believed it was in their child's best interest to do the same. After repeated visits from Rukma, they agreed to call off the marriage.

Because of Rukma's efforts, 15 adolescent girls have now returned to school. Women here do not usually speak in public, but Rukma believes they should be able to talk to anyone. "The girls ask me, 'How will we ever get rid of our fears?'" says Rukma. "We are trying to give them the confidence and an education so that they can grow stronger. The girls have already come a long way. "In the past, they didn't even have the courage to leave the house," says Rukma.

Empowering girls Every child's right to free expression is a guiding principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Now the adolescent girls in Chandrapur are becoming active members of their community and are themselves challenging discriminatory beliefs and practices.

Deepshikha was launched by UNICEF in 2008 in partnership with the Government of Maharashtra and local non-governmental organizations. There are now more than 2,200 Deepshikha groups in four districts in Maharashtra, reaching more than 50,000 adolescent girls. "You can make a difference – a big difference – by capitalising on the energies of young women," says Chief of Field Office for UNICEF Maharashtra Tejinder Sandhu. "Investing in an adolescent girl also means that you are investing not just in an individual, but a whole family."

Potential 'prerikas' are identified by local village committees and nominated for a 20-day training programme in which they learn about child rights, health, and sex and gender issues. After the first 10-day training session, each one goes back to her village, identifies local adolescent girls and invites them to form a Deepshikha group.

Widening horizons After completing 40 sessions, each Deepshikha is encouraged to form a Self-Help Group (SHG). The SHG opens up a savings bank account, with small amounts of money added each time, to form a small-scale fund. This is accessible to group members who need to cover essential education and healthcare costs. The money can also be put toward small business ventures

Rukma is a single mother and a volunteer facilitator at the local Deepshikha, or adolescent girls' group. The Deepshikha programme promotes increased participation among girls in decision-making that affects them.

Reshma, 17, is bright-eyed and confident. A few years ago, her parents decided she shouldn't attend school. Reshma began learning how to sew clothes but soon realised that she wanted to do more. When the Deepshikha group started in her village, she decided she wanted to be part of it.

“The first time I attended a Deepshikha session, my parents were confused and they told me I wasn’t allowed to go,” says Reshma. “But then, when I told them what I’d learned about how to improve our community, they agreed to let me.” Reshma’s has since grown in self-confidence and her father is now a fervent support of the Deepshikha programme. “Look at the change in all these girls. They’re working so hard now and they have so much courage,” he says. Of his daughter, he adds: “If she can now learn something, she can become someone.”

By Alistair Gretarsson

'The State of the World's Children 2011 – Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity,' UNICEF's new flagship report, focuses on the development and rights of more than a billion children aged 10 to 19 worldwide.

http://www.unicef.org/rsstracker/news/infobycountry/india_57948.rhtml



Celebrating 20 years at the heart of the Fair Trade movement

Shared Interest Society was established in 1990 by a group of fair trade pioneers. They shared a vision of reducing poverty and created a financial co-operative to pool money from investors. This money began to be lent to farmers and handicraft makers in the developing world. As the pot of money grew, so did Shared Interest's impact on the fair trade movement. In 2010 we lent almost £40 million to customers in 63 countries around the globe. Our headquarters are in Newcastle upon Tyne, but we also have offices in Costa Rica, Kenya and Peru as well as two remote members of staff in the UK in the South East and the North. Shared Interest's mission is "to provide financial services and business support to make livelihoods and living standards better for disadvantaged communities in some of the world's poorest countries."

How it works – As a co-operative Shared Interest pools invested funds from our members and lends these out to fair trade businesses across the world. Our members are individuals, schools, faith groups, businesses and all sorts of organisations who invest anything from £100 to £20,000 with us. Potential members complete a simple application process and once they are accepted into the Society they become a member enabling them to vote in our AGM, with one member being eligible for one vote, regardless of investment level.

We identify potential customers through various means including our networks with existing fair trade organisations and through awareness of what we do among fair trade businesses. We learn from potential customers, what their needs are and understand more about their business as well as explain what we do. An application for finance can then be made and is subject to approval.

Our members receive regular statements detailing their transactions and can invest further funds and apply to make a withdrawal by post. However, because of the nature of lending, there is an element of risk involved and we share this possibility of financial loss with our members. We do aim to pay interest and you can find out the current rate on our website and in our newsletters. Because customers repay their loans the invested funds can be lent on again and again meaning the impact of an investors finance can be realised many times over.

Namayiana is a handicraft group from Kenya; Namayiana means 'blessed' in the Maasai language. The 112-strong group initially applied to Shared Interest for an export credit facility, which was granted in order to help them pre-finance their orders.

Namayiana was set up in 1990 and before this there was no real role for women in the local community and no source of income but now they can pay for their children's education, as well as buy food, clothing and other household items. Knowledge and skills are passed down through generations with situations such as one member of the group having her daughter to help read instructions whenever she has a new beadwork item to work on.

Namayiana Project Manager Catherine Mututua said: *"with Shared Interest behind us, we have more courage to work harder and feel we can go far in our business...We want to say thank you to the hand that gives. We have received blessings from the labour of our hands and know there will be opportunities for more groups to be blessed through Shared Interest."*

(Talk by **Sally Reith**, Supporter Relations Officer (South East), Shared Interest, to NCWGB Foreign Affairs Committee on Thursday, March 3rd, 2011)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYbUERFu_50

(there are several videos here on the work done by Shared Interest, and other organisations)



Celebrating International Women's Day Centenary; keeping the momentum going to close the gender gap in agriculture

(Extracts from IFAD's Social Reporting Blog : posted by Daniela Cuneo Friday, March 18, 2011)

This year, in celebrating the centenary anniversary of the International Women's Day we paid tribute to the achievements of women who for 100 years have inspired both men and women. Over the last 100 years, women made a compelling case to achieve equality. While we've made great strides there is still lot to be achieved to close the gender gap on many fronts.

On **Monday 8 March**, on the occasion of the presentation of the "State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in agriculture – closing the gender gap for development" a joint **FAO -WFP –IFAD*** publication, an international panel of experts discussed ways and means of closing the existing gender gap. In Rome BBC's Zeinab Badawi moderated two lively panel discussions .

The panel discussed the role of women in agriculture and rural economy. During the discussion, time and again, both the panellists and the passionate audience - including numerous students, reiterated how women are more innovative than men, more creative and can make ends meet with fewer resources, more conscientious in managing resources, more productive than men (if they are given the access to the same productive resources as men) and more pragmatic than men.

The panellists agreed that one of the reasons why the agriculture sector is under-performing is because women do not have access to the same tools and resources as men. The "State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11" reports that "more than 100 million people could be lifted out of poverty if women had the same access to productive resources as men". One of the report's main conclusions is that once women have access to fertilizers, seeds,

land, credit, technology and education, they will give a boost to the agriculture sector and contribute to creating a vibrant and highly productive agricultural sector.

Despite the fact that millions of women in rural areas across the globe are responsible for growing, harvesting, storing, preparing food, very few own the land. Why? The whys are different from region to region, from country to country, from village to village. They may be legal or cultural. But regardless of the geographical and national peculiarities, one common element is the fact that women often times are unable to defend their rights simply because they are not aware of them.

The panellists unanimously agreed that women need to be empowered and to do so, the development community, governments, men and women need to translate words into action by involving women much more in the business sector, in the decision making processes and allowing them to lead the way, in changing men's mentality and mind-set, in changing laws, and investing more in women and paving the way to grant women equitable access to the necessary resources.

*** IFAD : the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations, was established as an international financial institution in 1977. IFAD's mission is to enable poor rural people to overcome poverty.**

FAO : Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN. WFP : UN World Food Programme

Full text available on UN Gender Equality News Feeds 18 March 2011

<http://ifad-un.blogspot.com/2011/03/celebrating-international-womens-day.html>

Recent Book Recommendations by Foreign Affairs Committee members

"Solar" by Ian McEwan deals with a looming energy crisis and climate change, with room for comedy. In an interview in Earth Matters (the magazine for Friends of the Earth), McEwan says the idea came on a trip to the Arctic as part of a cultural project known as Cape Farewell. The trip to the Arctic described in the book gives an extra meaning to bonding.

"The Children's Book" by AS Byatt tells of the interwoven lives of English and German families, against the background of pre and post WW1. Family relationships, class, politics, Arts and Crafts, women's independence thread through a compelling story across generations.

"The Hare with Amber Eyes" by Edmund de Waal traces a Jewish family's history across Europe, from Odessa to Vienna and Paris, through world wars and a unique collection of netsuke, which eventually returns home to Japan.

"The Boy who Harnessed the Wind" by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer. Inspiring story of teenager growing up in Malawi, and the poverty and famine of 2001.

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother by Amy Chua: an engrossing read, and a very different 'take' on Western parenting.