



International Peace Update

Women's International League  
for Peace and Freedom

The background of the cover is a photograph of a waterfall in a lush forest. The water is white and foamy as it falls over a large, dark log that spans across the middle of the frame. The surrounding trees and foliage are dark and dense. The word "Water" is written in a large, white, serif font across the middle of the image, partially overlapping the waterfall and the log.

# Water

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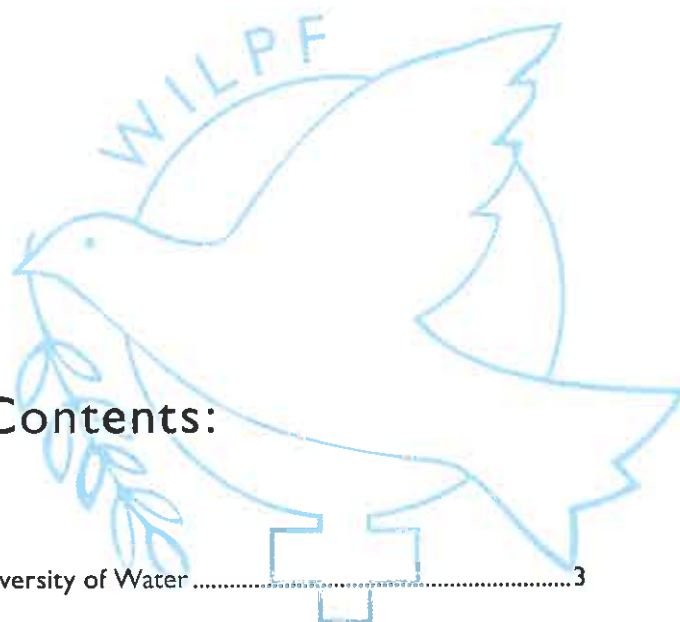
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## Editorial

# *The Diversity of Water*

– From the Beauty of Nature to the Cradle of Industrialization

*Annelise Ebbe, WILPF Vice-President*

Water is the overall theme of this issue of the IPU. The idea was to approach the theme from every imaginable angle, also different artistic angles.

Many WILPF sections in various countries have worked with the water theme for a long time, and for some sections different and serious problems related to water have been an every day reality. We have contributions from some of these sections.

However the artistic angles were totally absent when all the contributions on water had landed on the desk of the editor.

It is understandable because the problems are overwhelming, but it is definitely also lamentable because the vital beauty and luxuriance of water can give energy, will and hope to go on with the important work of ensuring all peoples access to an adequate and clean water supply.

In order to communicate this aspect of water to all the readers of the IPU the editor and her husband took an excursion to the Northern outskirts of Copenhagen where a system of small streams and lakes in a valley that winds 11 kilometres through the landscape offers a wonderful insight for the mind in the use of water in the childhood of industrialization as well as an extraordinary beauty for the eye. A magnificent and dramatic nature with steep and forest-clad hills, big lakes, still bogs and several gems in the form of water mills and old factories from the early industrialization. The water photos in this IPU are all from this route. The name of all this is Mølleådalene that can be translated (rather clumsily) into The Mill Stream Valley. Mølleådalene was once the most industrialized area in Denmark and through centuries water power was exploited here. The proximity to the capital combined with the big and dependable flowing waters set the development going.

The stream has its source in a lake. From there it goes to Lyngby where water power was used for two corn mills in the Middle Ages. From 1640 a production of muskets and other hand weapon was founded. Later on the industrial production consisted of such as paper, coins, and manufacturing of clothes. From 1834 the industrial production was given up, and the mills were only used for corn milling. Today one of the old mills is a museum and the other sells the produced flour and meal.

From Lyngby to Øresund (the sea), Mølleåen falls 19 metres over a distance of eight kilometres, and the stream is bearing 300-400 litres per second.

In the middle of 1600 nine mills from Lyngby to Øresund were changed from corn mills to small industrial mills most of all because the royal power needed weapons and gunpowder for the big wars at that time. From 1858-1918 a new fortification was built around Copenhagen. A fortification canal was dug 1886-87 as part of the total fortification. During war the idea was to close the natural water outlet through Mølleåen. The water could be led via the dug channel, and from where it ended it could flood a low-lying valley and in that way be a part of a defence ring around Copenhagen. At the outfall of the stream in the sea Strandmøllen (The Beach Mill) produced paper for 300 years from 1599. This mill is the only one that is still used, not for producing paper any longer, but nevertheless still functioning. Walking from the two old corn mills of which one is now a museum through the extremely beautiful landscape along the stream to the still functioning mill, gives you a totality of fantastic experiences: sumptuous nature; security in the bad way in forms of war waging and armed defence; human security in the good way in forms of food security etc, let alone a tremendous interesting history of the industrialization. And it is all about water!



## Indian cities are water-starved cities, not rain-starved cities

*Meena Shelgaonkar, Treasurer and  
Coordinator WILPF India*

Water crisis is emerging into one of the major global concerns today. Drought and flood visit one after the other with equal severity to inflict suffering on the masses at different places. We get a lot of rain, yet we do not have water. Why? We have more water on earth than land. In India, Cherrapunji, which receives about 11,000 mm of rainfall annually, suffers from acute shortage of drinking water. Another Indian City from south, Chennai, receives annual rainfall in the range of 1200 - 1300 mm. This is higher compared to the India's average rainfall of 800 mm. However, this rainfall occurs in short spells of a few days - on an average Chennai receives rainfall for 300 hours throughout the year. Still Chennai

faces acute shortage of water.

This is because the rain water is not conserved but allowed to drain away. Thus it does not matter how much rain we get, if we don't capture or harvest it. The characteristics of our rainfall demands not only to conserve large quantity of rainwater during these few days but also to store wherever it rains in Metropolitan cities like Chennai, preferably for direct use and alternatively as ground water. Failure of rain water harvesting, results in flooding of low lying areas and wastage by means of runoff into the sea during rainy season and water scarcity during summer months. Also, due to the fast rate of urbanization, the city has become a concrete jungle and it is very

difficult to find open surfaces which would enhance the recharge of ground water. Even the open space left is paved with concrete or bitumen which does not allow the natural recharge of ground water. This highlights the need to implement measures to ensure that the rain falling over a region is tapped as fully as possible through appropriate water harvesting techniques for recharging the ground water aquifers as well as for direct storage and use of rain water.

**The question is how and how much water can be harvested?** The total amount of water that is received in the form of rainfall over an area is called the rain water catchments / endowment of that

area. Out of this, the amount that can be effectively harvested is called the water harvesting potential. The collection efficiency accounts for the fact that all the rain water falling over an area cannot be effectively harvested. How to harvest Rainwater? Harvesting rain water is very simple. When it rains we have to collect this water and not to allow it to run away. There are various techniques to do it. Broadly, rain water can be harvested for two purposes.

1. Stored for ready use in containers above ground or below ground
2. Charged into the ground for withdrawal later (ground water recharging)

We have forgotten to respect water bodies, we have forgotten how our ancestors harvest water, we have forgotten how to respect natural water recycling, we have forgotten to control population, we have forgotten to equal distribution of community water to every member of society including plants and animals.

Last year, on 26 June 2005, Mumbai, capital of Maharashtra faced horrible floods simply because of erection of cement jungle without considering proper capacity of drainage system. Water was logged for more than two weeks about 15 feet height in more than 200 Km area in western Maharashtra due to

construction of some technically wrong dams. The nightmare is still haunting the people after one year as very little measures are taken.

When we say water shortage, it is shortage of drinking water. Privatization of water bodies, linking of all national rivers, construction of big dams by displacing people, tampering with nature, unequal distribution of water either for drinking or agriculture are not good remedies in general. This shortage is created by us and requires participation of every individual globally.

One can say "Indian cities are water-starved cities, and not rain-starved cities."

## Ancient Water harvesting systems of India

*Mecna Shelgaonkar, Treasurer and Coordinator WILPF India*

In addition to rains India is rich in river beds and a number of water bodies. India is basically agricultural country. Agriculture requires lots of water. Once upon a time India was called a golden sparrow due to its richness. Now every day we are getting news of farmers' suicides due to loans. One of the major root causes is water scarcity. Water scarcity was handled by some indigenous methods by our ancestors. Below I have narrated some historical water harvesting systems still in use but facing threats of extinction.

### **Kunds of Thar Desert**

In the sandier tracts, the villagers of the Thar Desert evolved an ingenious system of rainwater

harvesting known as kunds or kundis. Kund, the local name given to a covered underground tank, was developed primarily for tackling drinking water problems. Usually constructed with local materials or cement, kunds were more prevalent in the western arid regions of Rajasthan, and in areas where the limited groundwater available is moderate to highly saline. Kunds provided convenient, clean and sweet water for drinking. Kunds were owned by communities or privately, with the rich having one or more kunds of their own. Community kunds were built through village cooperation or by a rich man for the entire community.

The first known construction of a kund in western Rajasthan was during 1607 AD by one Raja Sursingh in village Vadi-ka-Melan. During the Great Famine of 1895-96, construction of kunds was taken up on a wide scale. Jalwali, a village on the road from Bikaner to Anupgarh has nearly 300 kunds.

### **Kul Irrigation Method**

The Spiti area of Himachal Pradesh (a province in India) is a cold desert but surprisingly, agriculture is its mainstay. Spiti's lunar-like terrain was transformed into an agrarian success story by an ingenious system, devised centuries ago to tap distant glaciers for water. But short-sighted developmental policies, though

► well-intentioned, now threaten both this unique irrigation system and the social consciousness that spawned it. Spiti is an important trading post on the route connecting Ladakh and the plains of Himachal Pradesh. Villages in the Spiti subdivision are located between 3,000 m and 4,000 m, which means they are snowbound six months a year. Rainfall is negligible in Spiti because it is a rain-shadow area. The soil is dry and lacks organic matter. But, despite these handicaps, the Spiti valley has been made habitable and productive by human ingenuity. But Spiti's unique contribution to farming is kul irrigation,

which utilizes kuls (diversion channels) to carry water from glacier to village. The kuls often span long distances, running down precipitous mountain slopes and across crags and crevices. Some kuls are 10 km long, and have existed for centuries. The crucial portion of a kul is its head at the glacier, which is to be tapped. The head must be kept free of debris, and so the kul is lined with stones to prevent clogging and seepage. In the village, the kul leads to a circular tank from which the flow of water can be regulated. For example, when there is need to irrigate, water is let out of the tank in a trickle.

Water from the kul is collected through the night and released into the exit channel in the morning. By evening, the tank is practically empty, and the exit is closed. This cycle is repeated daily. The kul system succeeds because Spiti residents mutually cooperate and share. The culture also is instrumental in maintaining the carrying capacity of the surrounding cultivable land. However, this system, carefully nurtured through the centuries, now runs the risk of being upset through government intervention. Furthermore, the government's stipulation that kul water must be distributed equally is

## Water in Australia

*Mary Ziesak,  
IEC member WILPF Australia*

On a per capita basis Australia has one of the largest consumptions of water in the world. On average; each Australian uses over one million litres of water each year. There is no doubt that the current usage is unsustainable economically, socially and environmentally. Irrigated agriculture is the biggest user of water at about 70 percent, domestic households 12 percent, other rural use 9 percent and industrial 9 percent. In a typical Australian household in 1996/1997 each person used about 350 litres per day of water that had

been treated to drinking water standard. Half of this was used for gardens and flushing toilets. The major cities of Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth have severe water restrictions and heavy fines for those who violate these – and these restrictions are likely to be permanent.

Australia's geological history is that of a very old flat, landmass that had trapped salts carried in from the oceans in the soil, lakes and ground water. Approximately half the

island continent is desert, a quarter steppes and most of the arable land suitable for quality habitation is the eastern coastal strip. This strip supports about three quarters of the 20 million inhabitants. Much of the continent suffers from frequent severe droughts. In some regions the present drought is the worst in over 90 years.

Since Australia was colonised over 200 years ago the natural environment has been grossly exploited and much of the sensitive landscape has become useless for agriculture and

jeopardizing the valley's traditional social order, and the bada ghars face the loss of both control over water and their position in the village hierarchy. However, the disbanding of the traditional hierarchies does not automatically result in egalitarianism because the emerging social order is based on market forces and money power. This means that access to kul water will no longer be based on availability and need, and monetization of this resource will leave many of Spiti's families impoverished.

**Bamboo Rainwater Harvesting In Meghalaya** (one of the seven northeastern states in India), an

ingenious system of tapping of stream and spring-water by using bamboo pipes to irrigate plantations is widely prevalent. It is so perfected that about 18-20 liters of water entering the bamboo pipe system per minute gets transported over several hundred meters and finally gets reduced to 20-80 drops per minute at the site of the plant. The tribal farmers of Khasi and Jaintia hills use the 200-year-old system. The bamboo drip irrigation system is normally used to irrigate the betel leaf or black pepper crops planted in arecanut orchards or in mixed orchards.

The system is found in the 'war' areas of Meghalaya but is more prevalent in the 'war' Jaintia hills than in the 'war' Khasi hills. Attempts have been made to introduce modern pipe systems but farmers prefer to use their indigenous form of irrigation. The new systems have met with suspicion. Local farmers neither trust the new materials nor the people who supply them. These are some of the examples of adjusting with nature and sustainable development rather than distorting the environment.

grazing. De-forestation and indiscriminate use of ground and subterranean water or conversely overwatering has resulted in large tracts of land in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia becoming useless because of salination.

A major problem was initiated at federation of the Australian States in 1901 when the states were given jurisdiction over their water supply, disregarding the fact that the rivers and water catchments run across state boundaries requiring the use of water to be carefully allocated so that all farmers from all states have enough and overuse is avoided. Some say correctly that no-one should have a permanent right to water despite governments encouraging irrigators to take this for granted. Five hundred million dollars has

been allocated by the government for the Murray River's health; wasteful practices such as open channel irrigation have been superseded by more economic piping or drip feeding and a Cap has been placed on any increase in water diversion. The Mining and Mineral Industries are significant users of water resources and although they recycle and reuse water in some instances operations have been limited due to their inability to access sufficient water. Minerals are one of Australia's largest exports. Uranium mining in South Australia, which is the driest State, uses a large percentage of that States water.

There is constant debate over the rights of Indigenous people and their access to water for cultural and fishing rights in inland and offshore waters.

In Australia, the social impact of drought on an already weakened rural sector has been severe. Other factors are soil degradation, fluctuation in commodity prices according to the terms of international trade; increased input costs – seeds, fertilizers and pesticides and the restructuring of agricultural industries on economic rationalist principles. Debts to banks have forced sales of farms and mental depression leading to an increased suicide rate – mainly male!

The growth of an active rural women's movement from the mid 1980's through to the present can be seen as directly related to the deteriorating situation of the rural sector. Women working as farm labourers and off the farm have helped in many instances.

► The National Rural Women's Coalition which receives funds from the Commonwealth Government's Office of the Status of Women firmly believes that women should be included in rural policy development. Education in conservation of water and recycling of waste water are areas that require more funding to convince consumers of the extreme seriousness of water conservation.

Water has been a sleeping element in the privatisation debate in Australia. Payment for water in Australia has usually been a flat

rate for a set amount and extra payment for excess above that. Already in some states such as Victoria the user pays system has been introduced. The South Australian government outsourced water distribution and sewerage 15 years ago. International corporations already own some distribution rights are looking at Australia's "water industry" with further interest.

Australia stores more water than any other country to ensure a reliable water supply during periods of drought. There are 447 large dams for urban, irrigation and hydro-electric purposes and several

million farm dams. Plans for more dams are in the pipeline. Artesian water – 72% of which is suitable for stock, domestic and irrigation usually requires some treatment to make it pleasant and safe to drink.

In conclusion there is a new consciousness in regard to the preciousness of water in Australia and more serious planning is being addressed.

*Shortened Version of the paper given by the Mary Ziesak on behalf of WILPF Australian Section at the Kungälv Congress in 2004.*

## Water Conflict in the Middle East

### *The Lebanese-Israeli case*

*Roula Zoubiane,  
IEC member WILPF Lebanon*

Oil has always been thought of as the traditional cause of conflict in the Middle East past and present. No longer. Now, most borders have been set, oil fields mapped and reserves accurately estimated – unlike the water resources, which are still often unknown.

Water is taking over from oil as the likeliest cause of conflict throughout the Middle East, where the natural facts of water supply and the socio-political facts of water control, consumption and demand interplay to form a complex hydro-political web. The allocations of the region's three major river basins – the Nile, the Euphrates, the Tigris and the Jordan – are nascent sources of

tension, and potential sources of conflict. However of all the Middle East's river basins, it is the Jordan River that hosts the most fraught and inflammable dispute, and so for the two following reasons:

The most serious water conflicts in the region have centered on control of the tributaries and groundwater reservoirs of the Jordan-Yarmouk river basin. Its water resources are still an integral part both of the on-going conflict and of the currently paralyzed peace process, shaping the foreign policy of its riparian Middle Eastern countries: Syria, Historical Palestine (nowadays Palestine and Israel), Jordan and Lebanon, in

their mutual relationship, which is known as water diplomacy. This new concept means that water is seen as an important factor in determining a country's foreign policy, one which has caused war and featured peace, but which is unlikely to cause a new war.

One should not forget that the struggle for the possession of land and water has been the two – pronged basis of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The conflict began in this basin (Jordan – Yarmouk River basin) as a result of the rise of early Zionism with its aim of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine and this conflict has been the



center of interstate conflict since the establishment of Israel in 1948, a process which was motivated by two purposes:

The first one was related to ideology: In fact, as soon as the Zionist movement started settling the Jews in Palestine, it took an intense interest in water. Its aspiration to "make the desert bloom" reflected the ideological view that water was the "lifeblood of the system", "a prerequisite for a new society" and "a nation rooted in its lands". Thus water carries ideological weight for Israelis.

The second purpose was related to both security and economy: In fact, water has also been linked to the crucial matter of settlements which are seen as essential for security purpose. They are a first step in consolidating territory and in providing frontier resistance and time in case of attack.

Thus water has been so strongly related to the national interest through agriculture, security and ideology that the former Prime Minister Moshe Sharett declared: "Water to us is life itself."

A glance at the history of Israel's water policy reveals how its tactical emphasis has shifted while its dominant strategy has never changed. Israel's water policy has passed through four stages:

The first stage is distinguished by bargaining for water.

The second stage can be characterized as the development of national and shared water resources.

The third stage is marked by Israeli occupation of the region head waters.

The fourth stage is a return to bargaining tactics. During these four stages, Israel has maintained a single master policy:

- to increase its water resources;
- to overcome environmental constraints in making the desert bloom
- to make the Jewish homeland meet the needs of an ever-increasing population which seeks improved economic and social conditions

As far as Lebanon is concerned, there are in the southern part of this country, three rivers around which one of the multiple aspects of the Lebanese-Israeli conflict, has always revolved. The Litani is a small river and flows entirely inside Lebanon; therefore it is a "Lebanese River", but the Israelis wanted always to use its water even before the establishment of the state of Israel.

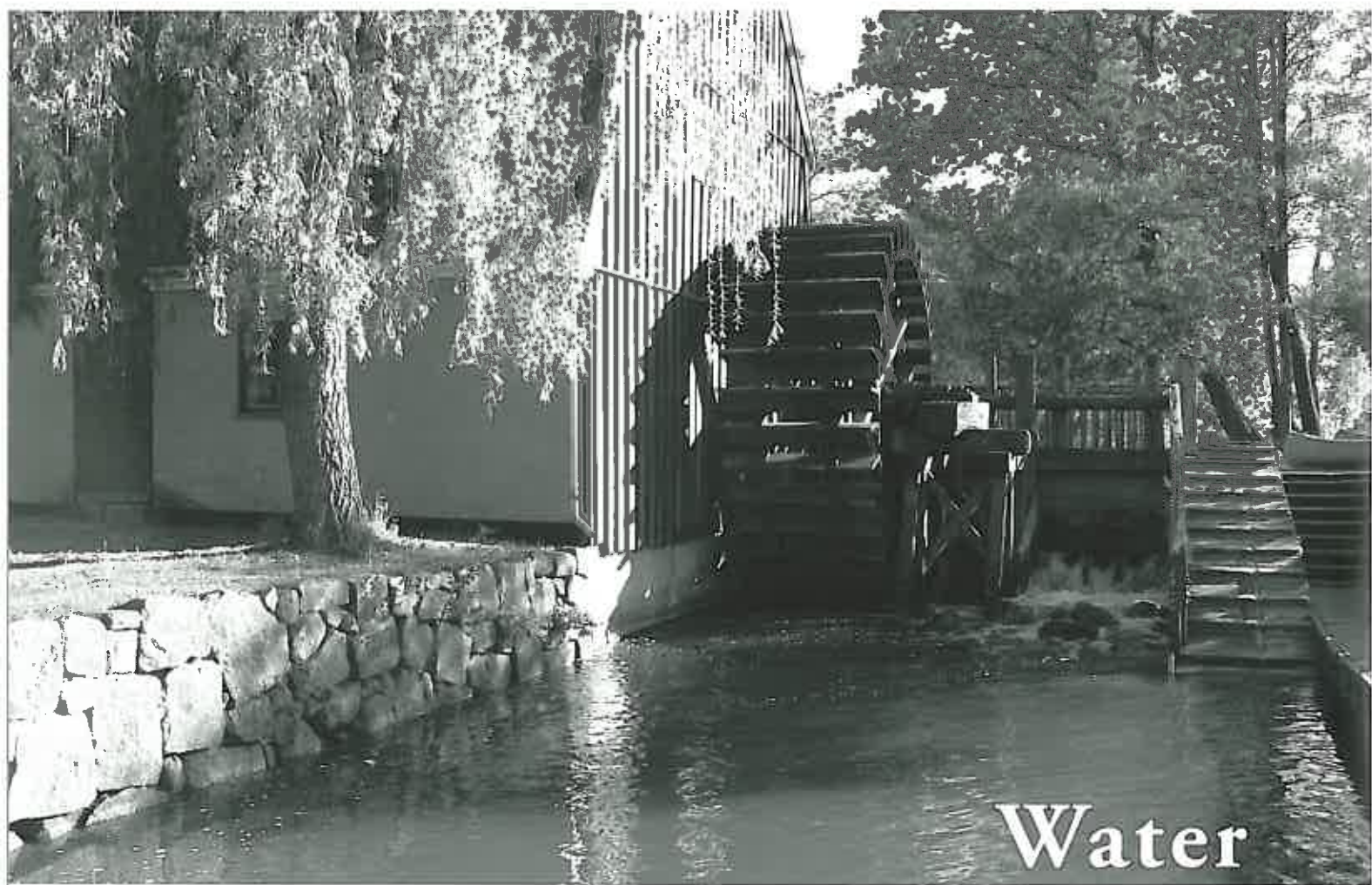
The Zionist movement, which recognized the importance of water in the area from the very beginning, included the river in the borders of the "to be established" state of Israel at that time. These borders included also all the main water resources in the area: the complete Jordan River system (including

Yarmuk, Dan, Banias, Hasbani rivers, Lake Tiberias, Dead Sea, etc.), Golan Heights, all water resources in Palestine, etc. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978 was called "Litani Operation".

During Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Israeli troops, as verified by Norwegian UN observers and acknowledged in 1983 by Israeli Science Minister Yuval Ne'eman in a candid TV interview, did tests to determine the suitability of a pipe to channel Litani water into the Israeli water system. Ne'eman said Israel abandoned the idea because of political risks and the "low yield of water". Small amounts of Litani water may have been pumped into tank trucks and delivered to Israeli or SLA installations.

From the time it occupied southern Lebanon and the Western Bekaa, Israel set out to destroy installations and displace the population while preventing those remaining in the region from availing themselves of the waters of the Wazzani and Hasbani rivers. Since 1978, Israel has been intent on gaining possession of all the waters of the two rivers, or approximately 16-million cubic meters yearly.

*Extremely shortened version of the paper given by Roula Zoubiane on behalf of WILPF Lebanon at the Kungälv Congress in 2004.*



## Water as a Catalyst for Change

*Chris Morin, Co President US  
Section Board*

Last year during the IEC meeting, we heard daily news briefs from around the world. A major story that developed from day to day was the devastating hurricane, Katrina, that hit the Gulf Coast of the United States. Being far from this tragedy, I really did not comprehend the loss. As the days continued and I arrived back home, the media coverage brought home the lethal cost of the inadequate public water management. Drinking water facilities were contaminated, public owned treatment facilities were non-operational, E. coli levels were greatly elevated and floodwaters threatened the health of anyone who came in direct contact with them.

This tragedy made those of us who never think twice about water supply or healthy drinking water, sit up and take notice. Unfortunately, Katrina is not a unique situation. Our nation's drinking water infrastructure and wastewater treatment plants are in sharp decline, according to a 2002 report by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), delivered to the US Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

The US Government continues to "look the other way" when it comes to meeting the domestic needs of the people. The ASCE estimates that drinking water systems alone face an annual shortfall of dollars 11 billion to replace aging facilities

that are near the end of their useful life. Safe water is a human right for all people and to have safe water is a responsibility of local, state and federal government. Citizens also have a responsibility to claim safe water as a right.

Enter the corporation. The two largest water corporations in the world are part of the French transnational, Suez, and German energy conglomerate, RWE. These multinationals are gaining a foothold in the United States. After purchasing American Water Works, RWE gained control of the largest US private water utility and expanded its customer base from 43 million to 56 million people.

In the US, this is one more notch for corporate power. As corporations continue their takeover of the US, we continue to lose power over decision-making. The corporation is such a part of US life, that most citizens are numb to the dangerous power that they have. We are also not aware of how much power we have given them. An example that hits home is our need for oil. Profits are good for the corporation. Decisions that are made about where to get oil, what cars to build that will use fuel from the oil, what country to support because we need their oil, etc., are corporate driven.

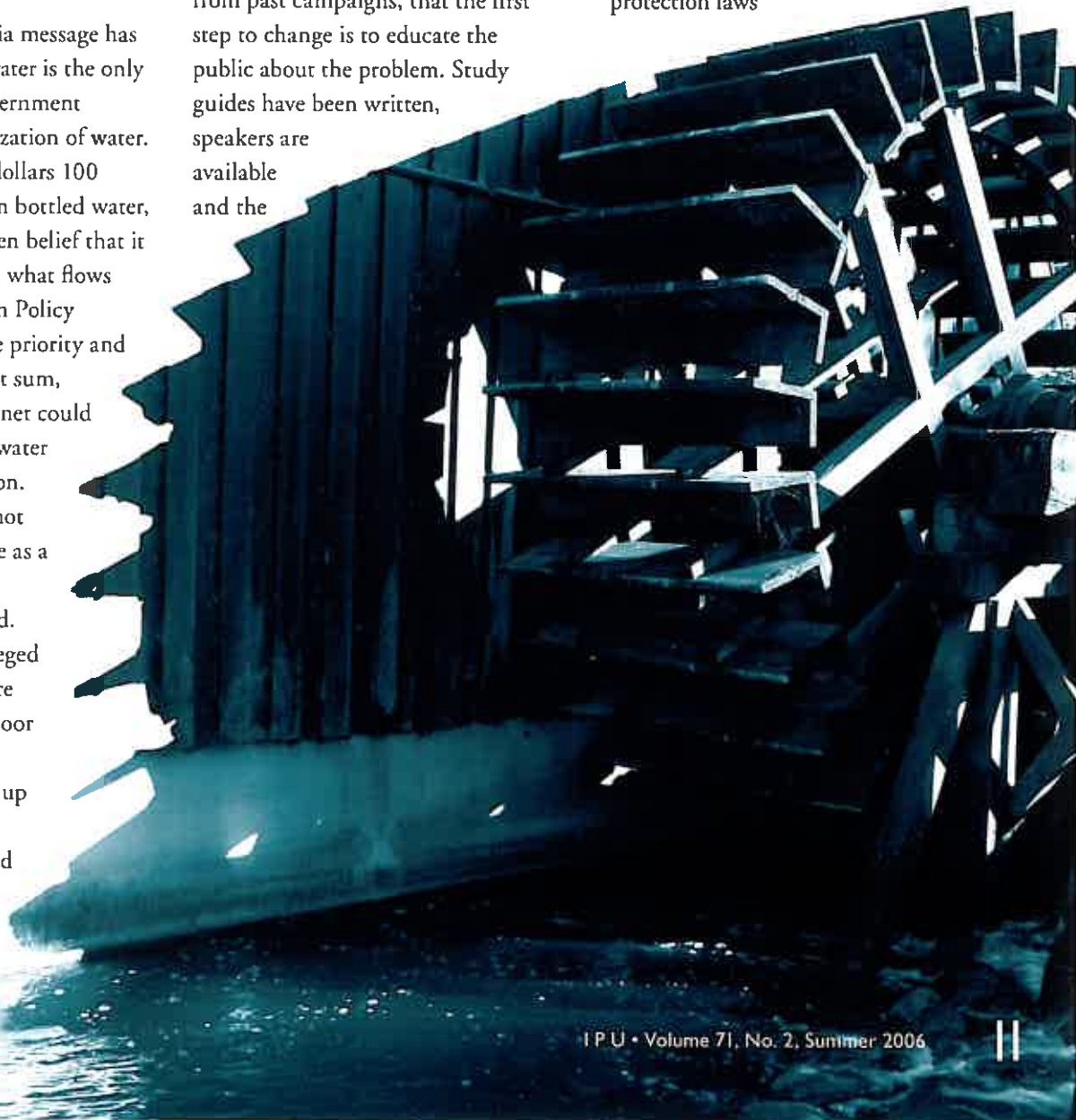
The corporate media message has been that bottled water is the only safe water. Our government supports the privatization of water. Consumers spend dollars 100 billion every year on bottled water, in the often mistaken belief that it is better for us than what flows from the tap. (Earth Policy Institute) Given the priority and for a fraction of that sum, everyone on the planet could have safe drinking water and proper sanitation. (EPI) Why is that not happening? Because as a capitalist society, privatization is good. The rich and privileged get richer, with more privileges and the poor get poorer. Instead of cleaning up our waterways and treatment plants and making healthy water accessible to

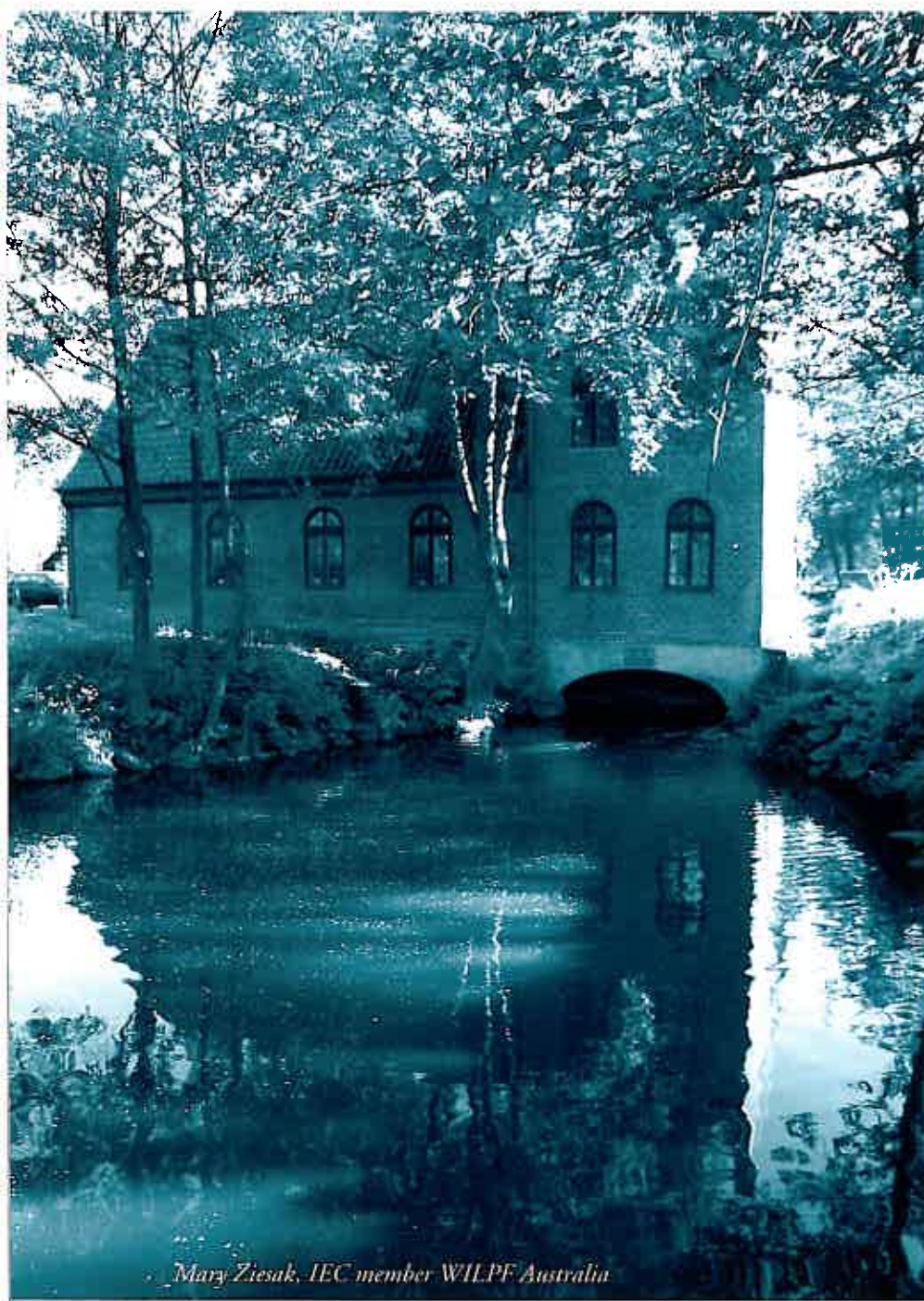
all, we have chosen the path of bottled water, a choice that not only distracts us from looking at the real problem but also increases pollution and depletes our natural resources. Only 14 percent of plastic bottles get recycled and millions of dollars in fuel costs, transporting the water, add to the burdens of bottled water.

What can be done? The US WILPF Section has chosen Water to be a major campaign from 2005-2008. A leadership team coordinates this campaign and they are an excellent source of resources, as to what can be done. We have learned from past campaigns, that the first step to change is to educate the public about the problem. Study guides have been written, speakers are available and the

leadership team has developed a realistic list of actions that one can take as an individual or as part of a group. They include:

- Ask public officials to reject the notion of privatization of public water and sewer systems
- Require Congress to stop underfunding public infrastructure facilities
- Contact local government officials and find out what your town is doing to protect and sustain its drinking water supply
- Organize your community to lobby for better groundwater protection laws





*Mary Ziesak, IEC member WILPF Australia*

# FLUID BONDS

Global Discourse in Gender and Water; Gendered Water in Times and Places; Gendered Cultures and Economics and Water: and Representations and Agency of Women in Water. These groupings are only an indicator and naturally issues and topics overlap and interlock. The papers included in the book were presented in 2003, the International Year of Freshwater, at a meeting devoted to gender and water auspiced by the National Institute for Environment at the Australian National University.

My interest and love of water and all its containments are life long. I lived beside a huge tidal river estuary and holidayed at the seaside as a child. Brisbane where I now live is enduring the worst drought for 100 years and education of the population, especially of women as homemakers and educators of children; in their attitude to this life giving element is imperative. When I was alerted to the book "Fluid Bonds – views on gender and water" edited by Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt I couldn't wait to read it.

Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, grew up in Bengal, India and studied at Burdwan University. She is the author of many books focusing on marginal communities, environmental issues and especially water. She came to Australia in 2002 to join the Resource Management in Asia, Pacific Program where she is Community Specialist in Natural Resource Management at the Australian National University in Canberra.

"Fluid Bonds" has twenty two chapters divided into four parts:

The papers cover the relationship, use and governance and lack of inclusion in decision making regarding water by women from such diverse regions such as the Andes, Rural India, and the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, California, Bangladesh, the Bengal Delta and Australia. Under discussion are the issues surrounding class and poverty, education, health and sanitation, culture and spirituality, economics and globalization, geography, access, occupations, irrigation, agriculture, pollution and contamination, ethnicities and more.

The chapter by Michelle Moffat and Umesh Pandey deals with both class and poverty from rural Nepal: “community’ demand for water supply services is too often made by the so-called higher class and better-off men of the community, with little prior consultation with poorer women and poorer men”

Nadi O Nari: in Chapter 22 writes: “I describe and illustrate the way rivers have been traditionally constructed as feminine in deltaic Bengal,”

Colonization has and still does insensitively distress indigenous people for example when early exploration and settlement of Australia horses and camels consumed vast amounts of precious water from wells and springs leading to conflict between Aborigines and explorers or

when mining operations completely destroy life in and around waterways.

The book has enormous amounts of interesting information and is very timely in the present era where privatization of this basic commodity’s distribution is happening, populations are increasing and droughts in some regions of the world are long and frequent. As a bonus the authors have given us many deeply sensitive insights into the way women relate to water as nurturers, carers and carriers.

Concluding her introduction Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt writes that gender and water concerns in civil society must include women in decision making and this must happen at all levels of government. She suggests that it might be possible to provide women with technical abilities to

handle maintenance of water supply projects which her book “Fluid Bonds” reveals is not an impossible task.

This book is a very valuable and intense work and a must be read for those who are already involved in water conservation and an excellent introduction to engage more people, particularly women, seriously in this vital pursuit.

*“Fluid Bonds: Views on Gender and Water” Edited by Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt was first published on February 26th 2006 in conjunction with The National Institute for the Environment (NIE), and the Australian National University, Canberra by STREE, an imprint of Bhaskal and Sen, 16 Southern Avenue, Kolkata 700 026*

## S T A T I S T I C S   O N   W A T E R

- 1.2 billion people in less developed countries of the world are without safe drinking water
- Another 2.9 billion people are without adequate sanitation
- Over 3 million people die from diarrhoeal diseases annually
- Two thirds of the city dwellers in the developing world lack sewerage and sanitation facilities
- In India, over 460 million people lack access to safe drinking water
- Every 8 seconds, a child dies from water related disease
- At the same time, \$US 4 billion is spent every year on bottled water and liquid drinks all over the world

April 26 2006 was the 20 years anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor catastrophe in Ukraine.



# Chernobyl - 20 years after

*Eva Fidjestøl, WILPF Norway*

In September 2005 eight UN agencies in cooperation with the governments of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia issued a 600 page report which tones down the environmental and health consequences of this catastrophe. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Nobel Peace Prize winner 2005, is the main organization in this group, together with UNSCEAR (United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic

Radiation) and WHO (World Health Organization). IAEA and UNSCEAR have strong links to the nuclear industry and WHO is bound by an agreement with IAEA from 1959. All these organizations receive advice and guidance on radiation doses and radiation protection from ICRP (the International Commission on Radiological Protection), established in 1952. ICRP is a follow-up of the radiation protection part of the Manhattan

Project which developed the first nuclear bombs. All members of the commission represent institutions which employ radiation. They claim that the radiation doses workers in the nuclear industry and the public receive are the smallest possible, considering social and economic factors. They also rely too heavily on the Hiroshima research project, which only accepts cancer, mutations and malformations as radiation related health damages.

Dr. Mikhail V. Malko at the Academy of Sciences in Minsk calls all these agencies by the common name, "The International Radiation Community". What does this community say about the consequences of Chernobyl? With only small variations the same as in their first report in 1991: They did not find any negative somatic health damages from radiation, and predicted also future problems in documenting increased cancer or genetic damages from Chernobyl. They claimed that a serious health problem was fear and "radiation phobia". In their book "Radiation and Health" from 1993 nuclear physicists from Oslo University commented on this report: "This group of experts, if anyone at all, ought to be trustworthy concerning Chernobyl".

In their recent report they estimate only 50 deaths to be caused directly by the accident. 99 percent of the children hit by thyroid gland cancer survive, thus not constituting any major problem. Yet they concede that a certain increase in other kinds of cancer has been registered. However they still maintain that that the greatest health problem caused by the accident is of a mental character – not least because of lacking adequate information. The report recommends that 70 percent of the land area in the evacuated areas be put to use again.

In Norway this report was received with indifference in the professional community as well as in the media. Most readers probably considered – as the professors in 1993

did – that we have to trust these experts and weighty UN agencies. In addition the IAEA has been awarded the Nobel peace prize and thus speaks with even more authority than before.

Activists and researchers in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, and international organizations as Greenpeace and WILPF consider this report as a "cosmetic" presentation. It is based on false statistics and does not consider a large number of scientific reports available. The report does not conceal that the Chernobyl accident was serious, but still it ended well. There are strong signals that we will see new efforts for nuclear energy in the industrialized countries and in the third world. This makes it important for IAEA as the prime advocate for nuclear power to present their message about a safe and environmentally friendly nuclear industry. Also the three countries hardest hit by the accident, with serious economic problems, would prefer to avoid the expenses to the Chernobyl victims and start utilizing the land which has been lying fallow. There is reason to believe that even in these countries the report will open for the construction of new nuclear power plants.

What is the truth about the Chernobyl accident today – 20 years after? A UN group headed by Secretary General Kofi Annan stated in 2001 that there may be nine million Chernobyl victims and that this may increase in the future. A multidisciplinary research group in Moscow headed by professor Elena Burlakova has presented research

results on the effect of low dose radiation on living organisms. For many years they have carried out laboratory animal experiments and epidemiological studies of large population groups living in the radioactively polluted areas after the Chernobyl accident. They conclude that it is possible to document a connection between low dose radiation and many kinds of health damage. When studying the relationship between radiation and health it is not sufficient to register only cancer, malformations and mutations. The radioactive substances people in the Chernobyl area receive through their daily diet contribute to a large part of illnesses generally documented in this area, and which is generally explained away as stress and radiation phobia. Dr. Burlakova's research community has presented new theories to explain this, maintaining that the present radiation protection measures are based on an incorrect understanding of the relationship between radiation and health.

Professor Y. Bandazhevsky was the dean of the medical institute of Gomel, Belarus, an area heavily polluted by fallout from the Chernobyl accident. After nine years of research he discovered that internal radiation from Cs-137 by low doses led to damage on vital organs. Heart damages may become irreversible. Sudden death caused by heart failure was observed in all age groups, including children. He accused the government of Belarus of not doing enough to prevent these health problems by providing clean food to the population. A number of scientists



consider his research work "Caesium cardiomyopathy" to be of exceptionally high quality. However, after having published this study Bandazhevsky was arrested, charged with corruption and sentenced to eight years in prison.

These two cases are not the only ones. Medical and scientific institutions in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine have produced a number of high quality research reports on various kinds of health damage caused by radioactive exposure. The results have been confirmed via animal experiments. Much of this research has been presented at international conferences in Geneva 1996 and Kiev 2001, but was not included in the conference reports. The rest of the world has been prevented from information about this research because the national authorities have silenced the scientists and their results.

Mikhail V. Malko claimed at a conference in Japan in 1998 that the International Radiation Community has misjudged the consequences of the Chernobyl accident since 1986. "All unbiased specialists draw the same conclusions: A crisis in the international professional community on radiation and health has led to rejection of reliable information for the benefit of their own opinions on how unimportant the Chernobyl accident was.

Rosalie Bertell explains this as follows: The damaging effect of radiation caught the interest of specialists and the military because they saw a possible use for nuclear

weapons in war. In particular those who plan this kind of warfare were interested in finding out how many enemy soldiers could be killed with such weapons while protecting their own soldiers. In the beginning of the atomic age specialists in many disciplines started to work on military projects. Later they turned to problems related to nuclear reactors for the production of electricity. Because specialists within biology, medicine and radiation protection have been so heavily involved in solving military and industrial problems they have not given enough consideration to problems relating to protecting public health from the damaging effect of radioactive radiation.

We in WILPF have for many years participated in efforts to publish correct information about the consequences from the Chernobyl accident. We have also worked for the amendment of the agreement between IAEA and WHO. Our demand to the UN is that in the future physicians and WHO health personnel should be in charge of evaluating radiation and health, not physicists associated with the nuclear industry.

*About the author: Eva Fidjestøl is a retired senior assistant professor of physics. She has published reports on uranium ammunition, Sellafield, children and radioactivity. She has written and lectured extensively on matters related to Chernobyl, and has visited the polluted zones in Belarus many times. Eva Fidjestøl is a member of WILPF Norway.*



## A Bird's Eye View

*Anita Pulier, WILPF USA*

At the 2005 WILPF congress in San Francisco a question was put to the group: Who is the world's most dangerous woman?

When I was five it was me. In bold defiance of my parents' absolute moral authority I crayoned a little flower underneath the kitchen table. Since I was never brave enough to confess I came to doubt my right to the title of "World's Most Dangerous Woman".

Recently, I turned sixty (like the UN) and against all odds that "most dangerous woman" makes herself known to me in unexpected ways. The face of a small grandchild with unlimited potential or a friend struggling with cancer speaking out against an unjust healthcare system or my husband, my father, my sons actively supporting women's rights. In fact that "dangerous woman" spirit is alive in each

of us who has the audacity to think we can make a difference.

During February 2006 many of these dangerous women came to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) where I was one of the WILPF delegates. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established by the United Nations as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council in 1946 to prepare recommendations and reports on promoting women's rights equal to those of men in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. The Commission also advises on urgent women's rights problems requiring immediate attention. The Commission meets for two weeks annually, when women from all over the world converge at UN headquarters in New York for official meetings and "side events" run

by Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's), including WILPF.

This year CSW focused on: Enhancing participation of women in development through an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women

Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership. These two themes elicited wide-ranging discussions of very divergent topics including sexual slavery, gender equality in government and women's participation in resolution and prevention of conflict.

About 1500 women attended the scores of events and meetings that make up the CSW experience. Over 40 of the women attending were WILPFers traveling from

▶ countries including Japan, India, Australia, Colombia and the UK. Dynamic connections were established between participants along with exchange of information. WILPFers huddled early each morning over coffee to discuss who was attending what meeting, to share impressions and get feedback.

While it was thrilling to meet “sisters” from all over the world my overall view of this 50th Session of the Commission was that the goal of equal rights for women remains far from realized because there is a striking lack of accountability behind all the resolutions and platforms. If a member state does not comply with Security Council Resolution 1325 (which ensures women’s increased participation in prevention, management and resolution of conflict), there are no consequences. None at all. States do not like to be criticized and the UN culture is a “culture of diplomacy” that protects many failures from exposure. This results in cheap but eloquent lip service being paid to the concept of equality by member States because it makes good press copy. When it comes to implementation of these concepts there is

very little progress indeed. Over 100 recommendations have been made on women’s roles in conflict prevention but little action has been taken. To date gender has been too easily overlooked or ignored. Small areas of progress do exist and they give hope to activists to continue to put pressure on member states for better compliance with existing resolutions. Or perhaps they serve to keep activist women from getting more “dangerously” activated.

At least, meetings like the CSW make it more difficult (or at least embarrassing) to ignore half the world’s population. Women’s demands for basic human rights and gender awareness are now more organized. At the CSW “strength in numbers” invigorates the international community of activists, as sisters support each other’s causes across geographic boundaries.

The good source of information on the meetings themselves can be found on [www.peacewoman.org](http://www.peacewoman.org). The section called Women and the United Nations on the Peacewomen website contains a guide to the status of women’s rights around the

world and the issues presently being dealt with at the United Nations itself. The statements released to the press at the conclusion of the 2006 CSW also offer a good summary of the conclusions reached: “No tool for development more effective than empowerment of women, says Deputy Secretary-General, as women’s commission opens 50th session.” [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1539.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1539.doc.htm)

“Absence of women from leadership positions undermines democracy, commission on status of women told.” [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1541.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1541.doc.htm)

“Despite major gains, women bear disproportionate share of poverty burden, remain politically underrepresented, UN commission told.” [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1543.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1543.doc.htm)

“Gender permeates causes, consequences of international migration, Commission on Status of Women told.” [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1544.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1544.doc.htm)

These statements and more are also available online at [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/50sess.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/50sess.htm) Obviously much remains to be done.



# Towards Peace Education for small children - a Personal Experience



Sculpted by Claudia Nolan; Commissioned for the Peace Garden at Fresno State University

*Annelise Ebbe, WILPF Vice-President*

When I was 20 years and had studied for two years my boyfriend and I decided to get a child. Everything was very well planned: I would finish my minor subject in the beginning of January, give birth to the child in the end of January, then half a year off together with the baby before starting my principle subject in September. All that could go wrong went wrong. I was physically ill during most of the pregnancy and was at the hospital for a long time before I gave birth. However the worst thing was that the fear of war that had been a problem since my earliest childhood and which had motivated me to join the Campaign Against Nuclear Weapon escalated tremendously. I could hardly listen to the news without being afraid, and being locked to a bed 24 hours a day in a room together with other women who wanted to listen to the radio was nothing but an ongoing nightmare. As soon as my boy child was born and I was out of the critical state physically, everything was much better. Still afraid, but controlled and dedicated to teach him peace.

For instance I told his grand parents that they were not allowed to give him toy weapons. He was together with me until the kindergarten took over some of the day, and since he expressed himself very early his father and I tried to teach him that you do not solve conflicts by fighting. In the sandpit together with other students' kids he was actually rather good at solving conflicts. Some time before he started in the kindergarten my mother asked if it might be a good idea to give him a small toy pistol. Although she was a member of WILPF, she had her reasons, wanted him to be like other boys in the kindergarten. In the beginning I refused, but little by little she more or less convinced me. She gave him one, and he went directly to the waste bin and threw it away. We never talked about it again. When he started in the kindergarten one of the boys was rather aggressive and not willing to solve any problem by talking. The kindergarten teachers told me that I had a problem. Not the other boy

or his parents let alone the teachers themselves. Only one time my child defended himself by hitting this boy. My son didn't like it, neither did I, even though I told him that I understood what had driven him. For the first time the teachers were satisfied with his development: Today he behaved like a real boy! This is more than 30 years ago. Hopefully most educators have learnt peaceful conflict resolution now.



The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is the oldest women's peace organization in the world. It was founded in April 1915, in the Hague, the Netherlands, by some 1300 women from Europe and North America, from countries at war against each other and neutral ones, who came together in a Congress of Women to protest the killing and destruction of the war then raging in Europe. WILPF is an international non governmental organization (NGO) with National Sections in 37 countries, covering all continents. Its International Secretariat is based in Geneva and maintains a New York UN office. Its aims and principles are:

- to bring together women of different political beliefs and philosophies who are united in their determination to study, make known and help abolish the causes and the legitimization of war;
- to work toward world peace; total and universal disarmament; the abolition of violence and coercion in the settlement of conflict and its replacement in every case by negotiation and conciliation;
- to support the civil society to democratize the United Nations system;
- to support the continuous development and implementation of international and humanitarian law;
- to promote political and social equality and economic equity;
- to contribute toward co-operation among all people;
- to enhance environmentally sustainable development.

