



NFA RESPONSES ON ACTIVITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2008

ARGENTINA

Meetings of the different chapters of FAMU focussed on discussions of progress in attaining identity, empowerment, justice and equity for women in Argentina.

A high priority for FAMU is attaining protection for the girl child and equality of wages between men and women.

Most chapters identified and celebrated women who had made particular contributions in their field of expertise and who were recognized nationally and Internationally.

A number of them were members of FAMU.

In Buenos Aires the chapter was invited to visit and celebrate with the star military corps, 'Gral Jose de San Martin' marking the fact that women are now members of the Argentine Army, Navy and Air Force.

In Rosario the day was marked by the launch of the draft programme on the 'Rescue of the Girl Child from Street Peril'

AUSTRALIA

AFUW does not do anything in its own name to mark IWD but its members tend to participate in an event of their choice in their local area. The events are specific to the state or territory and most of them are organized by UNIFEM of which AFUW is a member.

AFUW has noticed that schools are becoming more involved in hosting IWD events as a means of celebrating women and as a fund raiser for local school needs. Likewise they note that businesses use the occasion to promote women and the success of equal employment opportunities. AFUW is of the opinion that this proliferation and diffusion of activity has taken away the significance of the day as an international day of recognition of women.

CANADA

The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) has had an annual national International Women's Day fundraising project the last three years, with the recipient funds being given to an international agency for aid or development. Each CFUW Club is asked to raise funds in their own Club and area. This year the funds went to **Watercan** which supports projects that:

- Are long-term development initiatives
- Use low-cost, locally appropriate technologies
- Integrate water supply, sanitation and hygiene education activities
- Emphasize community ownership of planning and management
- Emphasize self-help and community participation
- Benefit and involve women

Two clubs reported on their own programmes for the day.

In Vancouver they joined forces with the United Nations Association to run a series of workshops on **Women Supporting Women**

The workshop titles included:

- It's not just words – Women and the political process
- Enterprising women – Women in Business
- International Human Trafficking – Protecting Women and Girls
- Biothel – Good for Women, protecting Women
- Women in the Aboriginal community – Empowering aboriginal Women and Girls
- Women Volunteering internationally – sharing our knowledge

In Kanata, west of Ottawa, the focus was on **Imagine a world where equality reigns. What would it look like?** Converting men's ties into tea cosies was their fundraising event for Watercan!

EGYPT

Reports of a range of activities in Cairo and in Alexandria held during March and April celebrated the work, empowerment and achievements of women across many walks of life. The activities took the form of seminars, workshops and training sessions and one sale of handcrafts made by University women members. Several of the events were prepared and presented in cooperation with other women's organizations such as the National Council of Women, the Women and Development Organization, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the Law Aid Organization and others.

The themes centred on 'Women in Leadership Positions', the 'Importance of Women's Role in Society', Female Employment and Privatisation Policy', 'Combating Violence Against Women', 'Egyptian Women in Parliament for 50 Years', 'How to Manage Small Projects',

Of particular significance for University women was a 'Young Leadership Training Project' for 20 pre-registered participants. Based on similar workshops held at IFUW Conferences in Manchester and Perth the participants were seen as a core of young women coming into the membership.

ENGLAND

The British Federation of Women Graduates celebrated IWD at the same time as they held an Executive Meeting and it followed World Book Day. To mark the day each participant was asked to name a favourite 'living' female writer and their report provided a book list with 12 interesting titles. I am sure that the CIR for BFWG would be happy to pass it on to interested people.

FIJI

The young members arranged an evening of art, poetry and music to celebrate Women's Day. The theme was **Woman: in celebration of you. A night of art, dance, poetry and song**

All proceeds of the event were forwarded to the scholarship Fund which is paying the tuition fees for young women studying Automotive and Electrical Engineering at the Fiji Institute of Technology. FAWG has successfully sponsored young women who have graduated in male dominated fields. With this project we aspire to encourage more girls to take up study in non-traditional areas.

IRELAND

There were reports from 3 branches.

In Belfast, the Irish Federation of University Women joined women from all over Northern Ireland and England as guests of the Lisburn Soroptimists and heard an address by Baroness May Blood on the importance of advocating for those with no voice.

Others were involved in the Women's World Day of Prayer.

In Cork members gathered to hear an address on European Art 1200 – 2000.

In Dublin one group attended a lunchtime event at Trinity College organized by the Equality Officer at the Centre for Gender & Women's Studies and WiSER - the Centre for Women in Engineering & Science Research.

Another group used the day to publicize their activities and links with national and international organizations using posters, information leaflets, membership forms and the remaining copies of their book, *A Danger to the Men? A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004* - about to be re-issued.

The event included two speakers one of whom had been associated with the branch of FUW since student days and who spoke of the importance of 'education, legislation, and implementation - key steps which could ensure progress for the benefit of all human beings - women, men and especially children - so urgent given the global crisis of climate change and the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals'.

LEBANON

Objectives for University Women in Lebanon are to help women overcome legal obstacles and to put an end to all the discriminations affecting them. Working with the 'League of Women's Rights' they are particularly concerned about 'crimes of honour', the right to work, recruitment, salaries, maternity leave family indemnities and social security. They have also worked with the Women's Council and the National Congress to implement a project of law on the electoral law and give a quota to women in the Parliament.

The country was destroyed by war. There is need to help women regain their courage, continue to fight misfortunes and tragedies, help traumatized children and give them support and comfort. Once they regain their normal life, they hope to continue working on the objective of getting all their rights, and fight all discrimination against women.

MONGOLIA

IWD is a public holiday in Mongolia. University women joined 200 women from public organizations and institutions to celebrate at the National Centre Against Violence.

Others were involved in a celebration of motherhood at the 'Meritoriously Mother' function which is advertised on national television and by other national media outlets.

MAUW has joined a coalition of 15 NGOs concerned about the Year of Food Safety. One of their members organized a '**Food Independent and Safety Policy**' Seminar which was held to mark IWD

RWANDA

The Rwanda Association of University Women celebrated the IWD by running a workshop and having a party

The Workshop was for 17 women members of the Nyamirambo Women Group. Gender concerns included:

- Improving Women's self confidence
- Improving their education.
- Get rid of ignorance

On the 8th March 2008 50 members of RAUW gathered at the home of Dr. Shirley Randell for a breakfast celebration of both IWD and Shirley's birthday.

Many members of RAUW went ahead to celebrate the day with other IWD events, eg at

- Kigali City Council event
- Rusizi Districts
- Musla Sector, Rwamagana Districts

SAMOA

The Samoa Association of Women Graduates (SAWG) took advantage of the fact that they have been part of a CEDAW Partnership multi media campaign on local radio and television to discuss women's issues as well as promoting the theme for this year "**Women in Decision making: Meeting challenges, creating change.**"

One member joined a panel with members of other women's organizations to speak on breakfast TV about the work that they do in their organizations. Another was on a panel for the Radio Polynesia (FM) together with the female Samoan Attorney General, a woman from the Ministry of Health and the Assistant CEO of the Ministry of Women and Social Development all discussing the theme of the day on an international level and in a local context. As well as health, education, social and legal issues it was noted that with the elections at the end of the month it was important to note that the Constitution of Samoa provides equal rights for all and that women are free to stand for parliament. Attitudinal bias was the main obstacle but this year with a record number of 16 candidates running for parliamentary election (41 seats) there is a visible and positive change.

SCOTLAND

Ten Members joined the Scottish Women's Convention to celebrate IWD in the Scotland Parliament. Three hundred women from the various women's organizations across the country entered the usually male dominated chamber of Scottish Parliament.

- They were informed that the number of women MPs in the Scottish Parliament had dropped.
- The Deputy First Minister is a woman and two leaders of the opposition parties are women.
- There is an increase in the number of female professors in the Scottish Universities.
- Recent availability of gender-disaggregated statistics was appreciated.

The guest speaker was a representative from Uri Global Women from South Africa. She urged women to shed the downtrodden image and to exercise their rights in a mature fashion.

SPAIN

About 200 were people involved in the final day of a written and speech competition on “ The Olympics of the Word” (Les Olympes de la parole). It involved parents, family’s, friends and high school students in Madrid and Bilbao.

UGANDA

8th March, (IWD) is a public holiday;

The Uganda Association of University Women celebrated the day by visiting the Wildlife Education Centre formally known as Entebbe Zoo.

The Theme for the Day (Uganda) was **The Role of Women in Transforming Society**. The objectives of the day were:

1. To recruit and initiate young members into the Association.
2. To relax and break the monotony of office work

Members:

1. discussed how UAUW can contribute to the transformation of society: Fight corruption, teach women about their rights, promote women’s’ education, initiate income generating activities;
2. discussed problems faced by girls in Universities and Tertiary institutions: -That is, poverty, lack of basic needs, sexual harassment, relationships, unwanted pregnancies, inadequate support structures, etc. Strategies for helping female students were suggested.
3. suggested a number of strategies to address these problems:
 - Conduct research on the impact of poverty among university students and find a way forward;
 - Provide guidance and counselling for girls (establish a counselling desk at university)
 - Hold Motivational talks for university students about life at campus and after campus
 - Encourage parental involvement in students life at university (Organize meetings, workshops with parents to brainstorm on issues affecting their children)
 - Radio programs on life at campus and coping strategies
 - Encouraged parents to pay tuition fees instead of handing it over to students
 - Revisit Newsletters production
 - Provide Flyers through newspapers to further publicize the Association.

NFAs WHO RESPONDED TO THE CALL FOR INFORMATION ON IWD ACTIVITIES:

Argentina, Australia, Canada, Egypt, England, Fiji, Ireland, Lebanon, Mongolia, Rwanda, Samoa, Scotland, Spain and Uganda

SUMMARY

Although the number of responses is still small as a percentage of our total number of NFAs it has not changed, for this year we heard from some countries that did not respond last year and didn't hear from some from whom we heard in 2007. What is clear is that those who report provide very different accounts of what is done to mark this day around the world and that most of the NFAs work with other women's organizations to celebrate the achievements of women in a variety of ways. It is particularly moving to read of the efforts of groups of women who are working to improve the opportunities and situations for women and girls where conflict and poverty are part of daily life or where the provision of education is still a matter for concern. What is encouraging about these reports is that we do have members who are pleased to share what they do to celebrate one another and the efforts of others in their society to support and empower women and girls.

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