



United Nations Association of Australia
WA Division

APRIL 2013

UNAAWA Newsletter

It is a relief to hear that Australia's case against Japanese whaling will (at last) be heard from 26 June in three weeks of public hearings at the UN's International Court of Justice in the Hague, Netherlands. It has been three years since the case was filed. Canada and New Zealand will also make submissions at the hearings to challenge the legality of the 'scientific' whaling activities in Antarctic waters. It will be several months before a ruling from the ICJ will be available, but it is hoped it will be before the next whaling season starts.

We have been very busy this month organising our 2 May event - 'Australia and the UN - can we make a difference?' One of the issues being considered is how civil society can engage with the UN to advance particular issues and hold Australia accountable to its international obligations. Some more information about how NGOs like ourselves can be involved in human rights advocacy at the United Nations in Geneva is outlined below.

The Human Rights Council (HRC) and its mechanisms (e.g. special procedures, the Universal Periodic Review and the complaints procedure) promote and protect human rights around the world. The HRC is an intergovernmental body of 47 UN member states elected by the UN General Assembly. The HRC is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. The human rights record of states is taken into account when member states are elected. A two-third majority of the General Assembly can suspend a HRC member if that member state is committing gross violations of human rights.

The Universal Periodic Review is a new mechanism to review the human rights obligations and records of all UN member states. Every four and a half years at the UN in Geneva, each country must declare what actions they have taken to meet their human rights obligations. It is noteworthy that since the UPR commenced five years ago, all member states have participated in the process. I am advised that independent monitoring of the human rights commitments is showing pleasing overall results to date—though there is plenty of room for improvements!



Australia undertook its first review in January 2011 and the next review will be in 2015. The review takes about 3.5 hours and takes the form of an interactive dialogue where the country presents its report and answers questions from other countries. Webcasts of live streamed reviews are available from the UN's website. While NGOs cannot participate in the review itself, they can submit written information and recommendations before the review.

The review documents consist of three reports: the member state's report, a report from independent human rights experts and other UN entities and a report from stakeholders such as NGOs. This third report is prepared by the OHCHR (Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights) and is based on the written submissions of NGOs, human rights institutions, academic institutions and human rights defender organisations. NGOs can also lobby other member States to raise questions during the review process itself and may hold side events to the UPR session to highlight issues. The case for change is made stronger if the NGO works with other likeminded entities to progress the issue.

To find out more about Australia's first UPR session in 2011 and to look at the national report and the NGO report, refer to:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/PAGES/AUSession10.aspx>.

For UPR information, see the "Practical Guide for Civil Society - Universal Periodic Review":
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/PracticalGuideCivilSociety.pdf>

[Carolyn Gatward, President]

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Yolande Frank Memorial Award—Fundraising Lunch

On 26 March, a group of friends of the past Yolande Frank, long time member of UNAANA, gathered at the Uniting Church Hall in Carlisle to remember Yolande's work and fundraise the prize money for the 2013 awards. Guests were very impressed by an address by artist Jana Vodesil Baruffi. Jana told us her story of struggle growing up in a communist country, her early years as a refugee in Australia and her decision to give something back to her new homeland. She has painted portraits of 50 of the inaugural women admitted to the WA Hall of Fame. Each one has contributed extraordinary work to the community of WA. Her paintings are done using a palette knife and she displays an ability to catch the character of the woman portrayed.

A delicious lunch was organised by Jean Russell and Owen Loneragan was surprised with a birthday cake. Elsie Tester organised the profitable raffle from which enough money was raised to provide the 2013 prizes.

The UNAANA Yolande Frank Memorial Award calls for children aged 9-14 to creatively illustrate one of the articles of the Declaration of Human Rights. This is the 4th year of the award. It commemorates the work of Yolande Frank, a survivor of the Holocaust. She had a passion that the children of Western Australia should understand the importance of the Declaration of Human Rights. The award will be judged in August 2013.

[Judith A. Parker AM, Chair Yolande Frank Memorial Award Committee]

'Calm, Care, Respect' Event

On Friday 1 March 2013, Mirrabooka Senior High School launched their values program "Calm, Care, Respect – as we STRIVE TO SUCCEED". The school has students from over 50 ethnic backgrounds. The values launch was an extension of the school's celebration of International Peace Day.

At the school assembly, UNAANA Immediate Past President Judith Parker delivered a personal message from Ban Ki Moon to the school assembly.

UNAANA and UN Youth WA were invited to participate with information stalls along with other community agencies working towards respect and caring in the community. UN Youth WA arranged for the students to paint a mural that the school could keep. Students were invited to place their hands into paint, then to leave the imprint of their hands on the calico mural and write a message of peace. (A washbasin and paper towels proved very handy.)



As 1 March was the afternoon before the long weekend, the school was in a relaxed mode. The students were clearly enjoying the break from the classroom and mutual respect and care for each other was very evident in their interaction. There was laughter and enjoyment as students participated in the wide variety of activities. As the afternoon came to a close, some students performed their cultural dances and music while others danced to the beat.

[Anne Barrett, UNAANA office volunteer]

World Refugee Day 20 June

Each year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) marks World Refugee Day on 20 June. This year UNHCR conducted its second annual art contest for school students. Contest winners will be recognised on World Refugee Day.

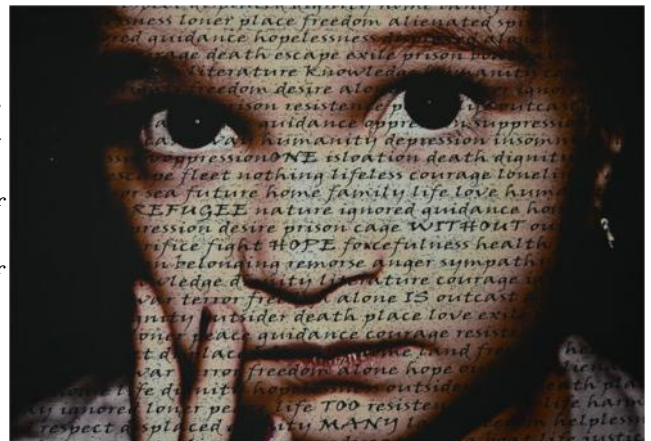
The art contest was part of UNHCR's global "1 Campaign", which is based around the simple statement, "1 family torn apart by war is too many." UNHCR asks that people reflect on this statement and think about what they can do to help refugees and their families to rebuild their lives. The "1 Campaign aims to communicate three core messages:

1. Survival / immediate needs;
2. Restoring hope / UNHCR response;
3. Finding home / opportunity to give.

UNHCR Regional Representative Richard Towle said *'the focus on family is very important for UNHCR, encapsulating issues such as family separation during flight, family reunification, the impact of detention, the special vulnerability of unaccompanied children seeking protection, single mothers as heads of households, and diverse or extended concepts of family.'*

(Right: Art contest entry by Mirela Kadric, 2012)

More information and resources on UNHCR's campaign can be found at www.unhcr.org.au.



[Rees Barrett, Convenor, UNAAWA Education Working Group]

United Nations - Important Dates



April

- 4 Apr—International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action
- 7 Apr—World Health Day [WHO]
- 12 Apr—International Day of Human Space Flight
- 22 Apr—Mother Earth Day
- 23 Apr—World Book and Copyright Day
- 25 Apr—World Malaria Day [WHO]
- 26 Apr—World Intellectual Property Day [WIPO]

May

- 3 May—World Press Freedom Day
- 12-13 May—World Migratory Bird Day [UNEP]
- 15 May—International Day of Families
- 22 May—International Day for Biological Diversity
- 29 May—International Day of UN Peacekeepers
- 31 May—World No-Tobacco Day [WHO]

[Photo: President CG and the aisle of flags at Palais de Nations, Geneva. The broken chair, owned by Handicap International, is a 12m high wooden sculpture of a chair with a broken leg, symbolising opposition to land mines and cluster bombs. This year's theme for Mine Awareness Day (4 April) is 'Lend a Leg']

International Women's Day—UN Women's Breakfast 2013

'EMPOWER WOMEN, EMPOWER A NATION'

On 7 March 2013, the UN Women International Women's Day Breakfast was held at the Perth Convention Centre where over 1000 people joined together for fellowship and breakfast and to be inspired by amazing speakers. Babs McHugh (National Resources Reporter, ABC Rural Radio and Online) was our MC. Professor Colleen Hayward gave a beautiful Acknowledgement of Country, sharing Aboriginal language with us. The Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC Minister for Women's Interests, made us welcome and spoke of the need for women to support those who are more vulnerable and increase awareness of how hard it is for some.

It was wonderful to see that most tables also seated three or four young women from various schools and, as appears to be the practice of this annual breakfast, one of these young women was also chosen to speak. This year Maggie Ritikis, from Chisholm Catholic College, spoke of the Critical Services Initiative and introduced a video about a UN Women's Project in PNG. Maggie is Carolyne Gatward's niece and she has very kindly written a little piece about her experience for this article:

"On Thursday 7th March Ellen, Melinda, Cassandra and myself accompanied by Mrs Cox were privileged in attending the International Women's Day Breakfast at Perth Convention Centre. Throughout the morning we were empowered by various speakers in particularly Rosie Johnson Senior Magistrate, Papua New Guinea who shared her devastating yet inspirational life story about the hardships she faced as a teenager growing up in a male dominant society. The strength she demonstrated throughout her life was truly admirable and she encouraged all women to stand up for the rights of those suppressed in PNG. It was a great experience to be enjoyed by all and we felt incredibly honoured to be a part of. - MAGGIE RITIKIS."



[Above: Maggie Ritikis (left) with Rosie Johnson (centre) and students from Chisholm Catholic College]

The Critical Services Initiative is to provide emergency hotlines and immediate safety, housing and protection, for women experiencing violence in our near neighbourhood Papua New Guinea. In PNG, 67% of women report having been beaten by their husbands and 2 in 3 women aged 15-24 are forced to provide sex for money, food and shelter to survive. Rosie Johnson spoke of her personal experiences as well as the sadness that is a part of her professional and humanitarian work. Rosie provides legal advice for women and in particular with regard to family and domestic violence. She also assists victims of violence and the organisations that support vulnerable persons within the community.

The morning was well supported by the partners of UN Women, the corporate sector and collaboration from several community service organisations. This is a busy morning with little time for networking but there is sufficient information to follow up contacts later to become involved with the work being done by so many inspiring women.

[Ailsa Allen, UNAAWA member]

[Photo R: UNAAWA members Kombe Musonda, Ailsa Allen & Carolyne Gatward]



News from other Organisations

Women on the Frontline—Afternoon Tea

Young UN Women Australia Perth invites you to the above event. It will be a formal sit-down afternoon tea featuring several women speaking about their experiences of working in peace and security roles and situations of conflict. The event will fundraise for UN Women Australia's winter campaign on Women, Peace and Security.

When: 2pm on 19 May 2013.

Venue: Esplanade River Suites, 112 Melville Parade, Como.

Contact details: Kate Allen 0415 274 224 katherine.allen@live.com.au



Amnesty's "Lets Talk" project

'Lets Talk' is a trial project initiated by Amnesty International to assist people with non-accredited, conversational English and general life skills by means of an informal chat/conversation.

Volunteer tutors will work with individuals where English is not their first language, to provide support in hourly one-on-one sessions on a variety of general topics such as transport, shopping and connecting with the community.

If you are interested in assisting or would like to participate in the program as a student, please contact Amnesty International by email at waaia@amnesty.org.au (Attn 'Lets Talk') or by phone 9476 4800.

When: starting May/June 2013, Mondays between 10am-2pm. Bookings essential.

Where: Amnesty International, Suite 70 Plaistowe Mews, West Perth (opposite City West train station).

Research Participants Sought

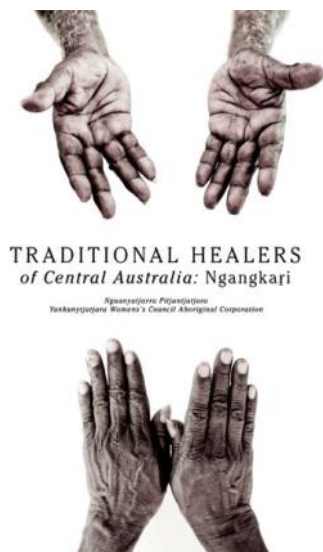
Maki Meyer, PhD student in Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Western Australia is conducting a research project on the life experience of 'bi-cultural'/'mixed race' migrant families living in Australia. He is looking for immigrant families of mixed cultural backgrounds to do interviews with.

Are you a member of an immigrant family, which consists of:

- an "Asian" parent (Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, or Chinese - including South-East Asian Chinese); and
- a "Western" parent (West European or North American) and
- their children (aged 15 years or over)?

If yes, and if you and your family are happy to participate in the interviews, please contact Maki for more details. Mobile: 0439 820744; 21096394@student.uwa.edu.au. All information you provide will be completely confidential.

Book Review—Highly Recommended



'Traditional Healers of Central Australia Ngangkari'

This is a collection of amazing stories of the ancient art of traditional Aboriginal healing, written by Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY), Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation. It contains unique stories and imagery and primary source material: the Ngangkari speak directly about Anangu [Western Desert Language Speaking Aboriginal people] culture and practices. It is accurate, authorised information about their work in their own words. The practice of traditional healing is still very much part of contemporary Aboriginal society.

The women's council was formed in 1980. The idea for a women's organisation arose from the South Australian Pitjantjatjara Land Rights struggle in the late 1970s. During consultations over land rights, the women felt their needs were not being addressed so they established their own organisation. What began as an advocacy organisation is now also a major provider of human services in the region.

In 2011, the 6th World Congress for Psychotherapy awarded the NPY Women's Council Project with the World Council for Psychotherapy's Sigmund Freud Award- a major international award. In 2009, they were awarded the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Mark Shelton Prize for outstanding contributions to Indigenous mental health in either Australia or New Zealand.

The book is beautifully illustrated - one for the reader to both enjoy and be informed. It would make an excellent gift. It is available from bookshops and online from Magabala Books [www.magabala.com] for \$49.95. Launched in 1987, Magabala Books is a not-for-profit publishing house based in Broome that aims to promote, preserve and publish Indigenous Australian culture.

[Judith Parker AM, UNAAWA Executive]

Historic UN Arms Treaty Approved

Extract from UN Unity (UNAA, 5 April edition):

"The United Nations passed the world's first ever global arms trade treaty on Tuesday 2 April 2013 in what has been lauded as a 'landmark agreement'. The treaty comes after seven years of negotiations. Australia was one of the seven original co-authors who sponsored the first UN General Assembly resolution in 2006. An overwhelming 154 member states voted for the treaty, including Australia. 23 member states, including India and Russia, abstained whilst three countries – North Korea, Iran and Syria – voted against it. Australia's Ambassador to the UN, Peter Woolcott noted that it was a 'treaty with teeth'. Critics of the treaty have commented that there is a long way to go before countries ratify the treaty and that implementation is years away. However, proponents say that it will force arms sellers to consider who they sell to as the information will have to be made public. This could have an impact on arms trading states such as Russia. Russia is currently selling arms to Syria, where 70,000 people have been killed due to the civil war, citing that there is no arms embargo forbidding the trade. Foreign Minister Bob Carr has said 'the Treaty will be open for signature on June 3' and that 'Australia will be one of the first to sign'.

Currently no global, legally binding instrument exists to regulate the international trade in weapons. As a result, gaps and legal loopholes can be exploited, allowing arms to be transferred to situations where they are used to fuel conflict, commit human rights abuses and undermine sustainable development and poverty reduction. Facts of today's world:

- 1,500 people a day are killed because of conflict and armed violence;
- 60% of human rights abuses have involved the use of small arms, control arms and light weapons;
- \$1.6 trillion is spent every year on arms worldwide;
- 12 billion bullets are produced every year – almost two bullets for every person in the world;
- 26 million people have been forced to flee their homes in fear of the lives due to armed conflict;
- Currently there are more global laws governing trade in bananas & coffee than there are for guns and ammunition; and
- In Burundi, Africa, a grenade costs the same as a pint of beer.

An Arms Trade Treaty

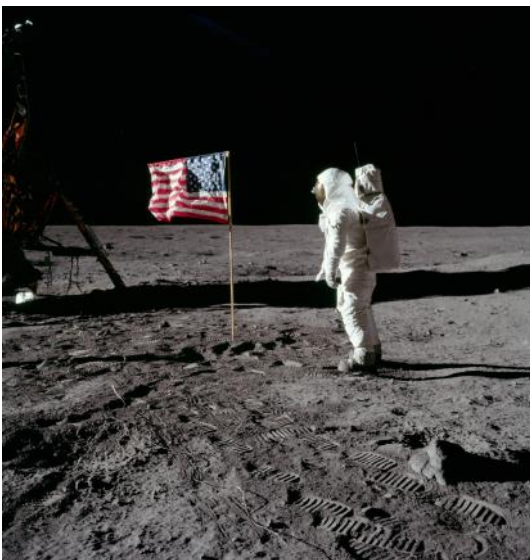
A global problem needs a global solution – a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty to prevent irresponsible arms transfers ending up in the hands of human rights abusers and repressive regimes around the world. Thanks to the support of hundreds of thousands of concerned people and after nearly ten years of campaigning, in March 2013 the United Nations voted ‘YES’ on a global Arms Trade Treaty.

My own personal experiences in Sierra Leone, Bosnia Herzegovina and Egypt have struck at my heart strings in the manner that arms can be obtained freely to any individual, which has left a legacy of humanitarian disaster. We all have a duty to extinguish this business of arms trade.

*Joseph Caruso,
UNAAWA Global Representative*

International Day of Human Space Flight

The International Day of Human Space Flight is celebrated on 12 April every year in order to recognise at an international level the beginning of the space era. This date reaffirms the important contribution of space science and technology in achieving sustainable development goals and increasing the well-being of countries and peoples. It is hard to fathom that not too long ago space flight was thought impossible, but these days it still captures the aspirations and dreams of a worldwide audience that remembers the first human space flight of Yuri Gagarin on 12 April 1961.



The historic event in 1961 opened the way for space exploration for the benefit of all humanity. The UN’s General Assembly expressed its deep conviction of the common interest of all people in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all countries the benefits derived there from.

In viewing the importance of this matter, the General Assembly created the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in 1959. Its aims are to review the scope of international cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space, to devise programmes in this field to be undertaken under United Nations auspices, to encourage continued research and the dissemination of information on outer space matters and to study legal problems arising from the exploration of outer space.

[Photo: Buzz Aldrin on the moon, NASA photo ID AS11-40-5874]

In recent times space exploration, in particular human space flight, has been significantly scaled back due to the global financial crisis forcing countries to cut back on their space budget. The traditional and original countries involved in human space flights are no longer the biggest participants. Instead we are seeing countries like China, India and even Iran take huge steps in developing human space flights. The future is as interesting as it is bright, and judging by how many movies and media reports are focused on human space flight, this matter still lingers strong in our imagination, dreams and aspirations.

[Max Fouda, UNAAWA member]

References: <http://www.un.org/en/events/humanspaceflightday/>

Further Resources

- **The United Nations Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific:** <http://www.un.org.au>
- **The United Nations Youth Association Australia (UNYA) WA Division:** <http://wa.unya.org.au/>
- **For international updates, sign up for UN Wire:** http://www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/index.jsp
- **For national updates, sign up for the UNAA newsletter UNity:** <http://www.unaa.org.au/subscribe.html>