

International Women's Program e-Newsletter Winter 2007/Spring 2008

Promoting Justice, Equality, and the Rule of Law

IWP's premier e-newsletter aims to share information with and promote collaboration on women's rights in the OSI network. Suggestions and input are welcome. Contact: women@sorosny.org.

News and Announcements

IWP Launches New Website

IWP's new website (www.soros.org/women) outlines focus areas for 2008—promoting women's rights in conflict and post-conflict societies, advancing women's rights via strategic partnership grants, and cutting-edge rights-based initiatives for marginalized women—and features numerous other resources.

New IWP Staff

Sarah Wikency joined IWP in February as the new advocacy and armed conflict specialist. With over 13 years of experience working in humanitarian emergency and post conflict settings, she brings extensive experience in the design and management of conflict prevention, humanitarian protection, and rule of law programs. Most recently IRC's International Programs Department senior advisor and a lecturer on humanitarian and post conflict issues at NYU, Ms. Wikency has also worked for the U.S. Department of State, UNHCR, UNDP, and the International Organization for Migration. She holds a BA in political science and economics from Wheaton College, a MA in International Relations (Middle East Studies) from Boston University, and a MS in Management (International Public Service Organizations) from NYU.

In January, Amel Gorani joined IWP as the new program officer for Africa. A graduate of Uppsala University with a MA in political science, Ms. Gorani has worked extensively within the development field and on human rights and women's rights issues in Africa and Europe. She served as the USAID Sudan Mission senior advisor on marginalized and vulnerable groups, and worked for the Swedish International Development Agency in Kenya as the program officer for Somalia and Sudan. Ms. Gorani has consulted for various organizations and served as executive director of Sudan Future Care, a local NGO working in war-torn eastern Sudan. She is fluent in Arabic, English, and Swedish and has basic French.

Additions to IWP's Board

In October 2007, Paul Hoffman joined IWP's board. A partner at Schonbrun DeSimone Seplow Harris & Hoffman LLP, Mr. Hoffman specializes in civil and human rights cases, including sexual harassment and gender discrimination. He is on the boards of several human rights organizations and is the former legal director of the ACLU of Southern

California, the former chair of the International Executive Committee of Amnesty International, and twice chaired the board of Amnesty International-USA. Mr. Hoffman litigated numerous human rights cases in U.S. courts; taught at Oxford, Stanford, UCLA, and USC Law School; and published articles on civil rights and international human rights law.

IWP also welcomed Ricardo Castro, OSI's general counsel, to the board. As general counsel, Mr. Castro provides a variety of legal services relating to all aspects of the network, including analyzing, structuring, and documenting the foundations' program-related investments. Prior to joining OSI, Mr. Castro was an associate at Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton, where he worked on corporate finance matters in Latin America. He also worked as a legal services lawyer for three years on behalf of people living with HIV and AIDS. Mr. Castro received his JD from NYU.

IWP Director Featured in *The Peacemaker*

In February, the Peace and Security Funders Group interviewed IWP Director Maryam Elahi for its monthly e-newsletter *The Peacemaker*. Ms. Elahi highlighted IWP's work on women and conflict, with special emphasis on her recent trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Website: http://peaceandsecurity.org/Peacemaker_February_2008.pdf.

Chechen Grantee Wins Prestigious Award

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children awarded its 2008 Voices of Courage Award to Gistam Sakaeva, a grantee of IWP and OSI's Russia Initiative. Ms. Sakaeva is a board member and project officer for the Chechnya-based women's organization Doveriye (Reliance), which helps wartime rape survivors and conducts campaigns and trainings to combat gender-based violence. In May, Ms. Sakaeva will accept the award at a luncheon in New York celebrating advocates' work to protect refugee women and children from violence and sexual exploitation.

[Advocacy on IWP Issues](#)

Op-Ed Published: "War Without End on Congo's Women"

Project Syndicate published an op-ed by Maryam Elahi on the atrocities perpetrated against women and girls in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and calling for:

- stronger leadership from the UN Secretary General to bring the issue to Security Council's attention;
- organization of a special Security Council session on the violence perpetrated against women in the DRC;
- thousands more peacekeepers (including women) deployed to the affected provinces;
- the ICC's chief prosecutor to accelerate investigations into gender-based crimes and bring charges against and prosecute perpetrators;

- the Congolese government to assist in efforts to pursue, arrest, and prosecute accused perpetrators before new local tribunals; and
- support from the international donor community for the local women's groups that provide medical care and other services for survivors.

Weblink: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/elahi1>.

IWP Speaks about the Responsibility to Protect

In March, Sarah Wikenczy presented at a Cardozo Law School conference on “The Responsibility to Protect: a Framework for Confronting Identity-Based Atrocities.” “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) refers to the commitment made by governments at the 2005 UN World Summit to protect all populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, and the international community's responsibility to act when governments fail. Harold Koh, dean of Yale Law School and former assistant secretary for human rights gave the keynote, and OSI President Aryeh Neier presented on the situation in Burma. Ms. Wikenczy spoke on how R2P is applied by regional and international organizations to their respective mandates and missions, and, using Darfur as an example, addressed what humanitarian protection means, the actors involved, what it looks like in the field, and the challenges faced.

Advocates from Uganda, Nepal, and the DRC Speak Out at IWP Event

During the most recent session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in February, IWP hosted “Women in Conflict Zones—Why are governments failing and how are women's movements responding?” The event was moderated by Aryeh Neier. Panelists Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng (Uganda), Gopal Krishna Siwakoti (Nepal) and Marie-Claire Ruhanya (DRC) spoke about conflict in their countries, the impact it has on women, their governments' failures, and strategies advocates are employing to bring justice and engage women in peace-building, reconciliation, and postconflict reconstruction. To listen to audio of the event, visit: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women/events/conflict_20080227.

IWP and OSJI Visit Capitol Hill to Push for Action on the DRC

On March 31, Maryam Elahi will present at the Congo Global Action Conference at the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC. The following day, Kelly Askin, of the Open Society Justice Initiative, will join a delegation and testify at a hearing before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law to bring attention to the atrocities perpetrated against women in the DRC.

IWP Partner Wins Victory in Kyrgyzstan

After a two-year advocacy campaign, the Women's Program of the Soros Foundation–Kyrgyzstan, together with a network of local women's groups, won a parliamentary quota for women. The campaign helped women from around the country run for office, and

Kyrgyzstan's parliament is now one-quarter female—before the last election there were no women in parliament.

Report on Refugee and Stateless Women in the Middle East and North Africa

During the recent session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Karama (means “dignity” in Arabic)—an anti-violence advocacy network in nine Arab countries and an IWP and OSI Middle East Initiative partner—launched its first report, “The Dream of Return, the Fear of Trafficking and Discriminatory Laws,” and co-organized a panel on “Dignity and the Politics of Financing of Women’s Rights.” Panelists discussed how displacement and statelessness have led to women’s invisibility and lack of voice, and the resources that would enable women to live with dignity and security. Simultaneously, Karama launched a new Arab Women’s Fund at the session, which will be the first foundation for women in the region. Weblink: www.arabwomensfund.org.

Joint Initiatives

IWP and OSISA Organize Site Visit in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In cooperation with OSISA, IWP, the Public Health Program, and the Open Society Justice Initiative traveled to the DRC to learn more about the overall situation of women’s rights with a focus on gender-based violence in the eastern provinces. The delegation identified support groups doing advocacy, empowerment, and skill-building work for women, as well as effective means of and venues for advocacy for OSI and other partners to bring about change.

IWP Visits Nepal and Cambodia

In cooperation with the Alliance for Social Dialogue (OSI’s partner in Nepal) and the Open Society Justice Initiative, IWP visited Nepal and Cambodia to consider the contributions it can make to women’s civil society and how women can become more active participants in the social and political processes. IWP is currently in talks with OSI partners about leveraging its resources to promote issues of justice, protection, and empowerment for women.

Upcoming Events

Film Screening: *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo*

On April 3, IWP will co-host a screening at OSI of *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo*, an award winning documentary film directed by Lisa Jackson. Used as a tool to advocate against sexual violence in the DRC and press for action, the film examines the conflict from the perspective of the women and girls who are most affected, but also offers testimony from everyone involved. The director and two of the film’s subjects will discuss the causes of the violence and the steps that the government and international community must take to stop human rights abuses and ensure justice.

Grantee Highlights

Thousands of NGO Leaders Convene at the UN for Session on Women and Conflict

To amplify the voices of local actors working to protect women's rights in conflict societies, IWP supported a number of NGO representatives to attend and advocate for issues relevant to their regions at the annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. In cooperation with OSI partners, including the Alliance for Social Dialogue (Nepal), the OSI Russia Initiative, and the OSI Middle East Initiative, IWP provided financial and/or technical support to the following NGOs: INHURED (Nepal), Doveriye (Chechnya), and Karama (Middle East and North Africa).

IWP Partner Submitted Shadow Report on Jordan

On August 2, 2007, the Jordanian government reported to the UN Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on its progress implementing CEDAW. IWP and OSI's Middle East Initiative jointly supported Karama, a long-term partner and network of antiviolenace women's organizations in the Middle East and North Africa. Karama partners in Jordan created a coalition that submitted the first-ever alternative NGO shadow report for Jordan and carried out advocacy work around the CEDAW Committee's concluding comments. As a result of their positive experiences, they are now working to mentor counterparts in other countries of the region using CEDAW to advocate on women's rights.

Traditional Region Partner Advocates on Gender Equality Architecture Reform

IWP's "traditional region" partner and grantee, the International Gender Policy Network (IGPN), was invited by the Gender Equality Architecture Reform group to be the focal point for women's civil society in Central and Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, and the post-Soviet region to participate in a three-day global strategy meeting. The campaign aims to create a new, consolidated women's agency in the UN system which would dramatically increase resources. Although the UN Secretary General has endorsed the demands of women's groups for the agency, the proposal is awaiting approval from the UN General Assembly (GA), and IGPN is playing a critical role working with women's groups in Macedonia and the European Parliament to encourage the GA President who is Macedonian to mobilize UN member states on the proposal.

IWP Grantee Promoting Justice for Women in Iraqi-Kurdistan

In Iraqi-Kurdistan, violence against women is widespread against a backdrop of poverty and war, where women experience honor killings committed with impunity, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Law enforcement agencies tend to protect traditional (tribal) structures and ignore cases of domestic violence. Women, who usually have no access to financial resources, are often left without any counsel in courts. IWP awarded a grant to WADI—a German-Iraqi NGO in Iraqi-Kurdistan working to combat

violence against women and improve the social and economic status of women—to support a new legal center for women. The new Women’s Law Center, covering the entire eastern region of Iraqi-Kurdistan including rural areas, will provide legal aid to women affected by the conflict; monitor and document court trials to ensure gender justice; and conduct trainings for lawyers, judges, state attorneys, and law enforcement agencies. In addition, WADI helped provide the first real statistics bringing much-needed visibility to and help break the silence on the taboo practice of female genital mutilation.

List of IWP Grants from November 2007 to March 15, 2008

The following is a list of grants awarded by IWP at the end of 2007 through the beginning of 2008. To view a complete list of 2007 grants, visit IWP’s website: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women/focus_areas/grantee_folder_initiative_view.

Women’s Initiative for Gender Justice
General Support Grant / \$200,000 / Africa

Vive Zene
Project Grant for Center for Therapy and Rehabilitation for Women Victims of War and Violence / \$40,000 / Bosnia & Herzegovina

INHURED International
Institutional Travel Grant for Participation in 52nd Session of the CSW / \$6,150 / Nepal

Isis Women’s International Cross Cultural Exchange
Institutional Travel Grant for Participation in 52nd Session of the CSW / \$15,000 / Africa

CONCERN
Project Grant for Establishment of an Open School and Production of Convention of the Rights of Children Materials / \$25,000 / Nepal

Women for Women International
Project Grant for Men’s Leadership Program in the DRC / \$80,034 / Democratic Republic of Congo

Women Make Movies and Jackson Films, Inc.
Project Grant for Advocacy campaigns on “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the DRC”* / \$166,000 / Democratic Republic of Congo

V-Day
Project Grant for Karama Regional Anti-Violence Initiative in the Arab World* / \$150,000 / Middle East North Africa

*cost shared with another OSI program

The mission of the International Women's Program of the Open Society Institute is to promote, protect and guarantee the rights of women and girls in countries where governance structures, the rule of law, public health and economic reform need urgent international support and where women and girls are facing extreme economic, psychological and physical harm due to armed conflict. Further, it aims to promote the advancement of women's rights and gender equality in law and practice, and the empowerment of women to ensure popular participation in the democratic process.

The IWP e-Newsletter describes charitable activities undertaken by OSI in accordance with regulations applicable to 501(c)(3) organizations. It also describes activities carried out and funded by foreign entities financed by non-U.S.-sourced funding.