

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S PROGRAM

EQUALITY AND JUSTICE UNDER THE RULE OF LAW

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN

Preventing Violence

Pursuing Justice

Achieving Leadership



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

Women and girls in societies with fundamental inequalities are the intended and unintended casualties of war. Women caught in military conflicts face sexual violence and exploitation, torture, forced recruitment, rape, mass rape, and trafficking. In postconflict transitions, women are often denied access to justice and a role in decision making, including peace and reconciliation efforts.

The International Women's Program supports courageous women in fragile, transitional countries in their efforts to create stable, egalitarian, and open societies.

## MISSION

The International Women's Program of the Open Society Institute promotes and protects the rights of women and girls in countries where good governance and respect for the rule of law are absent or destroyed because of conflict. The program supports social and political conditions in which women can find their own solutions to problems and make decisions about their own lives. Advancing women's rights, gender equality, and women's genuine participation in governance is essential to a free and open society.

In collaboration with other OSI programs, the International Women's Program supports efforts to end discrimination and violence against women, expand women's access to justice, and increase the participation of women as decision makers and leaders.



## Discrimination and Violence Against Women

Where equality is lacking in law and practice, and where conflict breaks out and security is compromised, women and girls are vulnerable to violence often perpetuated with total impunity by regular armed forces and armed civilians. This legacy of violence can pervade society for generations.

Respect for human rights is vital to the rule of law and good governance. Many governments fail to adopt and enforce laws that protect women and to stop practices that discriminate against and harm them.

The International Women's Program supports initiatives that seek to:

- strengthen legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms that focus on women's rights;
- build civil society's capacity to hold governments accountable to implement laws that promote and protect women's rights; and
- increase women's capacity to understand and assert their rights.



## Access to Justice

In the postconflict transition, justice for past abuses is necessary for reconciliation, to move a country toward stability, peace, and democracy. Effective law enforcement and judicial systems hold governments accountable, redress power imbalances, and maintain stability. Justice must be equitable and accessible for all.

Yet, women are often denied access to justice. Many women fear stigma and rejection by their communities for speaking out about the violence they have faced. Judicial institutions often lack sensitivity about the experiences of women during conflict or treat violations of women's rights as a low priority in comparison to other crimes.

The International Women's Program supports initiatives that provide:

- women with legal aid, counsel, and other related services that are otherwise not provided equitably in society;
- skills development and training on gender justice for judges, lawyers, and prosecutors; and
- support to transitional justice mechanisms so that they are equitable and inclusive of women.



## Women's Participation as Decision Makers and Leaders

When parties to a conflict, such as government representatives and militias, come to the negotiating table, they often address the redistribution of power, resources, and territory. Rarely is there genuine concern for human security, addressing the needs and rights of victims affected by the violence, and empowering all members of society to make informed decisions about their lives and communities.

Women's voices in governance continue to be absent due to their unequal representation in government positions, civil society, and business. As critical agents of social change, women must participate in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives that depend on them, especially during the processes of conflict resolution.

The International Women's Program supports initiatives that encourage and increase women's roles as decision makers in a number of areas, including:

- peace and reconciliation efforts;
- electoral and legislative processes; and
- disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, and reconstruction programs.





## Strategies

The International Women's Program operates in five unique ways:

**Grantmaking:** Funding organizations directly.

**Advocacy:** Bringing the voices of marginalized and overlooked women into the public arena.

**Capacity Building:** Strengthening the capacity of local nongovernmental organizations to fulfill their objectives.

**Convening Strategic Gatherings:** Promoting and inspiring change through strategic discussions.

**Coalition Building:** Supporting grantees to build coalitions and mobilize resources to increase the impact of their work.

## Geographical Coverage and Grant Support

For more information on the International Women's Program's priority countries and grant guidelines, please visit the website at [www.soros.org/women](http://www.soros.org/women).



## Open Society Institute

The Open Society Institute (OSI), a private operating and grantmaking foundation, aims to shape public policy to promote democratic governance, human rights, and economic, legal, and social reform. On a local level, OSI implements a range of initiatives to support the rule of law, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, OSI works to build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as combating corruption and rights abuses.

OSI was created in 1993 by investor and philanthropist George Soros to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSI has expanded the activities of the Soros foundations network to other areas of the world where the transition to democracy is of particular concern. The Soros foundations network encompasses more than 60 countries, including the United States.

### International Women's Program

Open Society Institute  
400 West 59th Street  
New York, NY 10019 USA  
TEL +1-212-548-0162  
FAX +1-212-548-4616  
EMAIL [women@sorosny.org](mailto:women@sorosny.org)  
WEBSITE [www.soros.org/women](http://www.soros.org/women)

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Page 3, Panos/Robin Hammond: survivors of sexual violence, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Page 4, Panos/Andrew Testa: searching for the disappeared, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Page 5, Panos/Tim A. Hetherington: women march for peace, Liberia  
Page 6, Corbis/Gideon Mendel/Action Aid: girls walking to school, Uganda  
Page 7, Corbis/Paul W. Liebhart: mother and daughter, Guatemala  
Page 8, AP Photo/Binod Joshi: International Women's Day rally, Nepal



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE