

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION ON WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

EVALUATION REPORT



DEFENDIENDO DERECHOS • DEFENDING WOMEN DEFENDING RIGHTS • DÉFENDRE LES FEMMES QUI DÉFENDENT LES DROITS HUMAINS

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Evaluation Report
International Campaign on Women
Human Rights Defenders (2005)

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the International Campaign on Women Human Rights Defenders.
It portrays the women human rights defenders and defenders of
women's rights who were killed because of their activism.

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Evaluation Report International Campaign on Women Human Rights Defenders (2005)

Amnesty International (AI)

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia)

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

Front Line

Information Monitor (INFORM);

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

ISIS-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE)

Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of
Women's Rights (CLADEM)

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML)

World Organisation against Torture (OMCT)

Table of Contents

Title	Page
Executive Summary	1
Background	4
One : The Consultation	5
Two : The Campaign	10
Three : Follow-Up Actions	23
Annex 1 : Summary of Participants' Written Evaluation	26
Annex 2 : Samples of Press Coverage on Women Human Rights Defenders	28
Annex 3 : Women Human Rights Defenders' International Coordinating Committee	31

Executive Summary

This evaluation report is an assessment of the activities and results of the International Campaign on Women Human Rights Defenders. It reviews the outcomes of the international consultation, the main event of the campaign, and the impacts of various activities carried out by the Women Human Rights Defenders' International Coordinating Committee (WHRD-ICC). It also contains the reflections of WHRD-ICC members and participants on the coordination, processes and logistics undertaken to implement this campaign.

The WHRD-ICC defines 'women human rights defenders' as both women active in human rights defence who are targeted for **who they are** as well as all those active in the defense of women's rights who are targeted for **what they do**. Simply, it pertains to human rights activists who are women, as well as a range of other activists of all sexualities who also defend the rights of women. In this report, the term 'women human rights defenders' covers both types of human rights activists.

The focus on women human rights defenders was deliberate. The campaign was intended to identify and expose the gender-based violations and abuses against women human rights defenders and develop strategies for more appropriate and gender-sensitive responses for their protection. It was expected to give due recognition and legitimacy to the work of women human rights defenders and their significant contributions in the advancement of human rights.

As explained in the context paper prepared by the WHRD-ICC, the campaign has four core calls. It calls for the recognition of women human rights defenders. It calls for resistance to state violence,

as a global protest against the criminalisation of human rights work and political dissent. It also calls for responsibility of different non-state actors, many of whom have appropriated human rights language, which has facilitated their violations of women's rights with impunity. By calling for the realisation of all human rights for all, the campaign also joins the international effort to integrate sexual rights issues and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) concerns into the human rights agenda.

The International Consultation on Women Human Rights Defenders held on 29 November – 2 December in Colombo, Sri Lanka was the first of its kind. It was a collaborative effort between women's rights and human rights groups to bring together women human rights defenders from various sectors and countries worldwide. It drew the participation of the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders; the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing; the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions; the former UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and chairperson of the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission; and the first Lady of Sri Lanka. It also generated international and local media and public interest.

As the participants affirmed, the consultation provided an international platform for the recognition of their work and a safe space to name the violations and abuses committed against them as women human rights defenders. It introduced a focus on the well-being of activists, as integral to their own human rights and the prevention of abuses against them. The plenary presentation and workshop on mental health were particularly well received, with participants requesting more tools and training in this area.

The event was also a mobilisation point for participants to create their own strategies for their personal security and safety. One such strategy is the formation of local or regional solidarity networks that can provide support for activists at risk. Participants from former Soviet republics created the International Coalition for Human Rights as a network among human rights activists, with a focus on women human rights defenders. It has started to send updates and action alerts on women human rights defenders from the region.

The campaign also generated valuable resource tools on women human rights defenders. The context paper of the campaign prepared by the WHRD-ICC explains the four core calls of the campaign and provides a comprehensive overview of the political considerations for engaging in this initiative. The paper, as well as other resource materials on women human rights defenders, can be accessed through the campaign website (www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org). The proceedings of the consultation has been published and a companion volume based on the presentations will also be produced. These publications will be the first comprehensive collation of articles and reports on women human rights defenders. Two videos produced by WHRD-ICC are also planned to be used as educational tools to explain the concept of women human rights defenders.

The campaign facilitated and supported action alerts on women human rights defenders at risk, with the organisations of various WHRD-ICC members responding to these calls for action. One of the successes is the release from prison of Juana Calfunao, one of the participants in the consultation. She was shot and arrested because of her activism on indigenous land rights issues in Chile.

Recommendations from the participants in the consultation pointed out that a documentation system on violations and abuses against women human rights defenders is essential in order to develop protection mechanisms that are more responsive to their needs. INFORM and other WHRD-ICC members are committed to developing a documentation manual as a follow-up action to the consultation. The documentation manual is intended to generate systematic recording of cases against women human rights defenders, not otherwise captured in generic human rights documentation systems.

One of the WHRD-ICC members expressed that “we benefited hugely from the engagement and exchange during the campaign, which will feed into our on-going work on human rights defenders.” The campaign successfully forged conceptual synergy and strategic alliances between the women rights and human rights groups that compose the WHRD-ICC. Many conveyed that the collective debates on women human rights defenders brought “changes in perspectives” or “paradigm shifts” that made them do their work differently. In-depth discussions on sexuality as an underpinning of many violations fostered new understandings of violations of human rights, and also paved the way for the integration of sexual rights issues in the concerns of the women’s rights and human rights groups in the committee. “Campaigning with care,” indicates a change in the advocacy strategy of members.

The campaign has come a long way from the initial planning meeting organised in Geneva, Switzerland in April 2004. Initially composed of nine members in that meeting, other organisations were invited in order to balance representation between women’s rights and human rights groups in the committee. A

coordinator was hired, and APWLD hosted the Secretariat. Having a full-time coordinator to work on the campaign and having a specific goal for the formation of the international committee worked well, according to members. The commitment and good will among the members and staff made this initiative possible despite limited resources.

The campaign has now inspired several concrete follow-up actions. Since it has achieved its goal, the WHRD-ICC members decided that the committee will be dissolved after the final reports are completed. Instead of a centrally coordinated campaign, WHRD-ICC members are now taking their own initiative to collaborate with other members or new organisations interested in this work. One of the opportunities for future collaboration, as suggested by the participants during the consultation, is the celebration of November 29 as International Women Human Rights Defenders' day.

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Background

This report consists of an assessment of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Campaign, and an evaluation of the International Consultation on Women Human Rights Defenders held on 29 November – 2 December 2005. It also includes the initial discussions on follow-up actions suggested by the participants of the consultation and members of the WHRD-ICC.

The WHRD-ICC convened the campaign and the consultation. Its members are: Amnesty International (AI); Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD); Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia); Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL); Front Line; Information Monitor (INFORM); International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC); International Service for Human Rights (ISHR); ISIS-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE); the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM); Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML); World Organisation against Torture (OMCT); Indai Sajor and Mary Jane N. Real.

The reflections captured in this report are gleaned from the evaluation meeting among members of the WHRD-ICC held on 3 December 2005, immediately following the consultation. The meeting was facilitated by Vahida Nainar, an experienced evaluator who has been familiar with this initiative. In the meeting, each member of the WHRD-ICC filled out a written evaluation form on the consultation and the campaign, and their responses are incorporated in this report. This report also includes responses of the participants collated from the written evaluation distributed at the end of the consultation. (See Annex 1) Some of the insights were also drawn from the minutes

of previous WHRD-ICC meetings, as reporting and monitoring on the campaign was included in the regular agenda. A monitoring and evaluation team was created within the WHRD-ICC, headed by OMCT representatives.

The monitoring and evaluation plan and methodology is simple. The objectives, key outputs and outcomes were developed at the start of the campaign. To evaluate the results, WHRD-ICC members, participants and others considered if the objectives and outputs were achieved. Their reflections are contained in this report. Their insights on some of the impacts of the campaign are also highlighted here. While some outcomes were achieved to an extent, the intended results require more than the current period of implementation, which is only one year.

The report consists of three sections: Section one focuses on an evaluation of the consultation, in terms of assessing the achievement of the objectives, a reflection on the processes and logistics, and an enumeration of the outputs. Section two is an assessment of the campaign as a whole. It includes an appraisal of various activities undertaken by the WHRD-ICC and its members to achieve the objectives; the composition of the WHRD-ICC, coordination and other processes; and an assessment of the impacts of the initiative. The last section is on follow-up actions recommended by both participants and the WHRD-ICC.

The annexes include a summary of the responses of the participants to the evaluation questionnaire distributed at the end of the consultation; some press clippings on women human rights defenders; and a description of the members of the Women Human Rights Defenders' International Coordinating Committee.

One : The Consultation

Objectives

As the main event, the consultation had the same objectives as the campaign.

- **to promote recognition and visibility of women human rights defenders working both on women's rights and other human rights issues;**

This objective was achieved by organising an international consultation on women human rights defenders, the first of its kind. The event brought together over 200 participants and guests from 75 countries. It also drew the participation of local dignitaries. The UN Special Rapporteurs on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Adequate Housing, and the Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders were among the plenary speakers.

This allowed for increased visibility of women human rights defenders as a category of human rights activists among UN representatives, national government officials, human rights and women's rights leaders, and other activists that participated in the consultation. The consultation gave international prominence to women human rights defenders by acknowledging their contributions to the advancement of human rights and exposing the gender-specific violations and abuses they face in their work. For some participants, aside from discussing risks and responsibilities, it was the first time that "we became aware that we, too have rights," and that they can seek redress for any abuse.

Press conferences were also organised during the consultation, which resulted in local and international media coverage of the event and brought visibility to the issues of women

human rights defenders, especially those at risk (see Annex 2). Banners and posters were also produced and displayed in public spaces in Colombo. This generated considerable interest locally, with university students, members of the academe, and NGOs requesting to participate in the event. The consultation was also web cast live internationally by Andrea Alvarado Vargas, Radio Internacional Feminista/FIRE. A link to the web cast can still be obtained through the women human rights defenders website (www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org).

- **to develop a range of strategies for the protection of women human rights defenders in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and other international instruments and mechanisms;**

A plenary session, specifically on UN and governmental mechanisms for the protection of women human rights defenders was designed and included in the program. As a result, many participants confirmed in their evaluation response that they had "a better understanding of international human rights mechanisms" for their protection. They also requested, as a follow-up action, the translation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in different languages.

UN and governmental mechanisms do not cover the entire range of protection for women human rights defenders. Many of the strategies for protection have been developed by activists themselves. These strategies were discussed in a plenary session on experiences of networks and NGOs in assisting women human rights defenders, especially those at risk. There were

also several workshops to identify strategies for the prevention of abuses and protection of women human rights defenders. Some of the key recommendations from the participants included the formation and consolidation of thematic, local or regional networks for the protection of women human rights defenders.

One of the participants, Leyla Yunus from Azerbaijan pledged during the consultation that participants from former Soviet republics will form such a network. The International Coalition for Human Rights was then constituted and it is now sending regular updates on violations against human rights defenders in their region, including a focus on women human rights defenders.

■ **to identify abuses that women human rights defenders experience in the course of, and as a consequence of, carrying out their work;**

Most of the participants confirmed in their written evaluation that they had “a better understanding of the concept of women human rights defenders”. Many of them “gained from the analyses of challenges specifically encountered by women activists”. The “themes announced during the opening plenary were addressed properly” according to participants.

The consultation also succeeded in creating a safe space for women human rights defenders to name the violations they face and begin to seek redress. Private testimonies with the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, particularly by women human rights defenders at risk, was one of the safe spaces provided during the consultation and many participants made appointments for their testimonies to be heard by the UN Special Representative.

The consultation also gave an opportunity for local government officials and UN Special Rapporteurs to contemplate the gender-based forms of violations and abuses faced by women human rights defenders in their work. UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, Hina Jilani, stressed that: “by becoming human rights defenders, women become visible, defying social norms of femininity. They risk verbal abuse, sexual abuse and rape – and a host of social consequences that men rarely face”. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Chairperson of the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission, stressed that: “cultural relativism is a major challenge to human rights movement as a whole” and “questioning of the universality of women human rights must be resisted”.

■ **to generate links and strengthen networks among women human rights defenders working in different areas of human rights;**

Many of the participants appreciated that the consultation brought them together to discuss the abuses and many challenges they face in their work, and provided an opportunity to build alliances, particularly among women’s rights, human rights and sexual rights groups that can enhance their protection. Lunch caucuses were organised by participants to discuss related issues such as prevention of abuses in armed conflict situations, diverse sexualities, femicide, and HIV organising and service provision. Participants were also given the opportunity to share insights about their work and concerns through a series of films and photo exhibits.

By meeting one another at the consultation, participants were affirmed that they are not alone in their struggle. They found it valuable that there is a potential for international solidarity not only within the women and human rights movements,

but also with lesbian, gay and other groups. When asked to cite what were the achievements of the consultation, many participants wrote, “sharing of knowledge and experiences”, “network created during the consultation” and “set up of concrete strategies for future action”.

■ **to generate human rights defenders’ capacity and tools for use in their work at the local level;**

This objective was addressed through several skills workshops organised during the consultation. There were workshops on security; documentation, investigation and monitoring of sexual violence against women in armed conflict situations; prevention, alert and protection tools; campaign and advocacy skills; and enhancing mental and emotional well-being for women human rights defenders. Immediately prior to the consultation, Front Line organised a two-day training on security for women human rights defenders. Many participants specified training on security and actions around mental health of activists as suggested follow-up activities.

Processes

The WHRD-ICC at its evaluation meeting on 3 December 2005 also reflected on the processes undertaken during the consultation, and the results. Comments from participants gathered through debriefing meetings or informal sharing were discussed. The written responses of the participants in the evaluation were also incorporated in the discussion.

The WHRD-ICC discussed the tension resulting from raising issues on sexuality, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) concerns during the consultation. It was perceived that there was much emphasis on LGBT issues. Participants had different levels of understanding

sexuality, and in this context, the tension might have been inevitable. The language and debates were new for some, and others found the discussions on LGBT concerns uncomfortable.

The WHRD-ICC reflected that while the participants were women human rights defenders, it could not be assumed that all were gender-sensitive. This partly accounts for the discomfort felt by some regarding LGBT issues included in the agenda and the discomfort felt by some LGBT activists who questioned whether their human rights were being sensitively addressed by all participants. Other WHRD-ICC members also pointed out that it could have been useful if the LGBT concerns were framed more emphatically within the broader issues of sexual rights and contextualised within the principles of indivisibility of rights, using the lens of intersectionality or multiple forms of discrimination faced by women human rights defenders by reason on sex, gender, class, race, etc.

Despite the tensions, LGBT and other sexuality-related issues were integrated into the human rights agenda, as observed by participants in their written evaluation. WHRD-ICC members also indicated that the process of raising sexuality and LGBT concerns is far from complete. Follow-up activities should look into other venues where participants can safely raise their own issues on sexuality and gain more understanding about the complexities of LGBT human rights issues. There is a pressing need to continue to raise gender consciousness among human rights and other activists to make them sensitive to women, LGBT and sexuality concerns, as well as to ways that sexuality can play out in a range of violations targeted at defenders.

The plenary and workshop space on mental health for activists was well received. Many of

the participants appreciated that this concern, often neglected, was included in the program. However, WHRD-ICC members noted that no adequate provision was made to assist participants regarding the emotional or mental impact of some of the issues discussed, particularly those who had been in areas of conflict or traumatic situations. Only two psycho therapists were at hand to assist participants who needed assistance during the meeting. A pool of therapists or counsellors should have been constituted and a quiet room allocated for the participants to have space and time to receive immediate help.

The participants noted that the plenary sessions brought “better understanding of the objectives of the consultation” and it provided a platform for “sharing information and experiences” and “capacity-building”. It was one of the most useful activities in the program according to them. Other participants, according to some WHRD-ICC members said that there was “no space for the participants to shape the agenda”. Some participants also felt that while sexuality and LGBT concerns were discussed, their issues as activists working on conflict, indigenous and land rights were not addressed adequately in the program.

The WHRD-ICC members noted that the program of the consultation was carefully planned by the WHRD-ICC precisely to ensure a clear agenda focused specifically on women human rights defenders, and not slip into discussions on women and human rights issues in general, as commonly experienced during regional/ national or thematic consultations. Such clear emphasis on women human rights defenders concerns in a context where participants have varying levels of gender consciousness might have given rise to the perception that “there was no space to talk about other issues”. Overall, many participants

expressed that the consultation met their expectations, covering “a plurality of issues and participation”.

The WHRD-ICC considered that while it was planned to have some space for an open forum following the presentations, the sessions did not start on time and there were delays due to technical problems with the translation equipment, hence there was little time left for question and answer. However, the participants affirmed that the break-out sessions provided an “opportunity to interact with each other”, which was not adequate during the plenary sessions. They also said that the workshops resulted in “concrete assessment of strategies used by participants” for the protection of women human rights defenders and proposals for campaigns and actions for the future. According to them, it was an adequate space to “share information and experiences”.

In terms of representation of the participants, they were spread widely, coming from different countries and regions. The process of allowing each member of the WHRD-ICC to nominate at least 10 participants has ensured that there was sufficient representation from women’s rights and human rights movements, from different regions. However, it was noted that there were fewer participants from other movements, such as those working on economic rights issues. The selection criteria and procedure set by the WHRD-ICC prior to accepting applications facilitated a transparent and clear process of choosing the participants for the consultation. Limiting the selection from nominations made by WHRD-ICC members contributed to ensuring that the consultation was a safe place for interaction among the participants.

Logistics

Many of the participants noted “transportation arrangements, welcoming, and personal assistance” as logistical successes. Participants also appreciated that there were translations provided in several languages, but complained about the technical deficiencies in the translation. Wireless translation equipment is not readily available in Sri Lanka, so headphones had to be wired and occasionally, there were problems with the connections. The program was sometimes delayed or had to be interrupted because of technical problems with the equipment. The participants also requested that subtitles in different languages be provided for the video shown at the opening plenary.

The participants remarked that the speakers were well chosen, and offered informed and thought-provoking perspectives. However, they said that the program was ‘heavy’, with too many issues. They also wanted more background information about the program and participants prior to the consultation.

Coordination

It was noted at the evaluation meeting that the coordination of the consultation went well. Organising committees to undertake the different tasks facilitated the work. Intensive preparatory meetings, including committee meetings and venue visits prior to the consultation, ensured that the program, selection of participants, logistical arrangements were executed well.

While all the major tasks related to organising the consultation were completed, WHRD-ICC members said there were not sufficient people to make the committees fully functional. Many already assumed multi-tasks to ensure that all concerns were attended to. The Secretariat also affirmed this observation, conveying that

the staff hardly had time to attend the sessions during the consultation. The Secretariat was also limited in language capacity, with only one intern undertaking translations and communications in French and Spanish, and another in Arabic, on top of their other key job assignments.

Outputs

The proceedings of the consultation will be published in four languages as one of the outputs of the event. A companion volume with all the presentations and other reading materials will also be produced as a resource on women human rights defenders. Two videos are also being made – one intended as an education tool on women human rights defenders based on the consultation; and a final version of the video shown at the opening plenary to celebrate resistance, and women human rights defenders’ contributions to human rights advocacy.

Two : The Campaign

Activities

At its planning meeting in April 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland, the WHRD-ICC decided that the event “will be more of an international campaign than an international meeting” as stated in the initial concept note drafted by Front Line. So while the consultation was the main event, other activities were carried out by WHRD-ICC members, individually or jointly, as part of the campaign. In the same meeting, the WHRD-ICC also drafted the objectives of the campaign, which were also the objectives of the consultation. The members also identified the outputs of the campaign to include documentation of the consultation, and recommendations of specific remedies for the protection of women human rights defenders.

Many of the activities undertaken by different WHRD-ICC organisations were on awareness-raising and advocacy. Some activities were on research and training at the local level. These campaign activities were carried out through various forms of collaborations: each WHRD-ICC member implemented their own activities on women human rights defenders; several WHRD-ICC members also jointly collaborated on some campaign activities; several WHRD-ICC members collaborated together on behalf of the WHRD-ICC for some of the international events of the campaign; and in major undertakings such as the consultation, the WHRD-ICC worked collectively. The impacts of these various activities will be discussed in this section.

The capacity of WHRD-ICC members to implement activities for the women human rights defenders campaign varied. Many of the organisations already had established programs, and women human rights defenders activities

had to be incorporated into existing program plans and budget. Hence, there were budgetary limitations for many, and lack of staff for some to fully carry out a women human rights defenders campaign within their respective organisations. ISHR, ISIS-WICCE specifically mentioned that due to lack of funds, they were unable to organise events or implement planned activities on women human rights defenders, which are now being considered as follow-up events to the consultation.

Some of the WHRD-ICC member organisations such as CLADEM, OMCT, Forum Asia and WLUML were undergoing institutional changes in 2005, which affected institutional capacity to participate programmatically in this initiative. Some members also pointed out that “there was lack of expertise” within the organisation, e.g., the human rights defenders coordinator is not well-versed in gender and women’s rights issues, or vice-versa, women’s rights advocates are not fully familiar with the nuances of human rights defenders concerns.

Aside from contributing volunteer work, many of the WHRD-ICC member-organisations supported the campaign financially. As will be discussed below, almost all of them paid for the expenses of their representatives to various campaign activities and WHRD-ICC meetings. OMCT, CWGL, and AI hosted the WHRD-ICC meetings in Geneva, New York and London respectively. APWLD provided secretariat support and AI also gave initial operational funds for the Secretariat. AI, APWLD, Forum Asia, Front Line, ISHR also supported 10 participants each for the consultation.

Amnesty International (AI)

Under its 'Stop Violence against Women' campaign, AI undertook various activities on women human rights defenders. It took on urgent action cases on women activists at risk, including producing documentation of their cases for public dissemination. It also participated in many electronic action alerts received from other WHRD-ICC members and their networks.

In 2004, AI organised consultations with a training component on women human rights defenders in South Africa; in Dakar, Senegal (with ISHR and other organisations; and a Latin American consultation in Brazil (with ISHR). It also hosted a consultation on violence against women, with women human rights defenders from the Gulf States.

AI produced varied media and education materials on women human rights defenders. It developed a collage of brief interviews on women human rights defenders worldwide, entitled "Stop Violence against Women campaign, voices from the frontline," which is uploaded at the AI's campaign website (<http://web.amnesty.org/actforwomen/index-eng>). Under the campaign, AI also produced a video documentary on the lives of five women activists from different regions, and released an AI version and a version for other organisations as well. AI also developed three theme leaflets, highlighting the risks and obstacles faced by women human rights defenders working on sexual rights, migrants and refugee rights, and the right to health. The leaflets, featuring case studies and calls for action, were distributed at the international consultation and are available on AI's website.

AI has a global human rights defenders' project, with three components: emergency support

and placement/temporary protection program; a framework and network for training and capacity-building; and a media and communication strategy to change perception and legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders. As part of its global work on defenders, between October 2004 and December 2006, AI will have facilitated workshops in 8 countries specifically targeting women human rights defenders. The workshops are designed to raise the profile and legitimacy of women human rights defenders, to bridge activism across movements, and to support their right to promote and protect human rights within their national context.

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

APWLD held several national consultations in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines on women human rights defenders. It also organised a regional consultation among women human rights defenders in south of Thailand in 2005. APWLD also raised the concerns of women human rights defenders in various fora in the region, some jointly with Forum Asia as mentioned below. Together with INFORM and ILHR, it launched the campaign at the Asia Pacific NGO Forum on the Beijing Platform for Action + 10 (BPFA + 10) in July 2004.

Resulting from these consultations, APWLD carried out four national campaigns on the urgent issues of women human rights defenders in these three countries and in Nepal. The campaign activities included action alerts, production of fact sheets and posters, and dissemination of videos. A training on documentation of sexual violence in armed conflict situations for women human rights defenders, was also jointly organised with Forum Asia and INFORM.

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia)

Aside from the documentation training jointly organised with INFORM and APWLD, Forum Asia also integrated women human rights defenders in its national training on human rights defenders in Taiwan and in its annual regional training on human rights in 2005. In addition, it made a compilation of key documents for the protection of human rights defenders for use as a resource in its trainings and also accessible to activists.

Forum Asia organised two advocacy meetings for Asian women human rights defenders in Bangkok in November 2005. It also discussed the campaign and the concerns of women human rights defenders in regional and international fora such as the Asian Civil Society Forum in Bangkok in 2004 (with APWLD, INFORM and ILHR), the Asian Consultations with Human Rights Institutions in Seoul, Korea in September 2004 (with APWLD) and the seminar on human rights defenders held in Oslo, Norway in May 2005 (with AI and WHRD-ICC Secretariat). In addition, it produced T-shirts and bookmarks as campaign materials.

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

CWGL and IGLHRC released its publication entitled "Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women's Organising". A ground-breaking resource tool on 'sexuality-baiting' and 'lesbian-baiting' of defenders, the book uses a human rights lens to describe a phenomenon that many human rights defenders and other activists face in all regions: 'sexuality-baiting', or the practice of discrediting and controlling people, organisations and political agendas through strategic use of allegations related to sexuality.

The publication was launched at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) session/Beijing

+ 10 in New York, March 2005. Since then it has been introduced in many fora, which also included discussions on women human rights defenders. Leaflets, web links and other campaign materials on the publication and sexuality-baiting were also disseminated widely.

CWGL included a reference to the women human rights defenders campaign in its annual 16 Days of Activism campaign. It also co-organised with WHRD-ICC members many of the panels specifically on women human rights defenders in various venues such as the World Social Forum (WSF) in Brazil, January 2005; the CSW session/Beijing + 10 in New York, March 2005; UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) session in Geneva, April 2005, and the Association on Women Rights in Development (AWID) international conference in October 2005.

Front Line

Front Line, an organisation which specifically addresses human rights defenders concerns, organised several activities on women human rights defenders. It convened an initial meeting among women's rights and human rights organisations during its 2nd Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders in 2003 that provided input to the campaign and consultation. In its 3rd Platform for Human Rights Defenders in 2005 in Dublin, Ireland, a panel discussion on specific challenges facing women human rights defenders took place, moderated by Indai Sajor. In the same venue, it organised training on security for women human rights defenders based on its protection manual on human rights defenders. Subsequently the training was offered on 27-28 November 2005 in Colombo, Sri Lanka for participants of the international consultation on women human rights defenders.

Front Line also takes up cases of individual women human rights defenders at risk on an on-

going basis through lobbying and advocacy as well as through its security grants program. Together with AI, it organised speakers' tours for women human rights defenders that visited Ireland. It also hosted a panel discussion on women human rights defenders at the Irish government-NGO forum in December 2004 also in Dublin, Ireland.

Information Monitor (INFORM)

INFORM has included promoting awareness on women human rights defenders in its various collaborative work with local and national women's rights and human rights organisations. It has started a national network for working on women human rights defenders issues. It has collaborated with Forum Asia and APWLD in a documentation training for women human rights defenders in Nepal as mentioned above. Also stated above, it worked with Forum Asia to introduce the theme of women human rights defenders in the latter's annual regional human rights training.

INFORM played a pivotal role as the local host of the international consultation on women human rights defenders. It finalised the context paper of the campaign and consultation. It led the logistical arrangements for the event, and mobilised the participation of key UN and government officials in the consultation. It also coordinated the participation of local groups, and made sure that local participants from outside Colombo participated in the consultation. It harnessed its link with the media for the press conferences on women human rights defenders and the production of media campaign materials.

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)

INFORM and CWGL, IGLHRC were the key advocates on LGBT issues, and they successfully integrated sexuality concerns in the agendas

of WHRD-ICC members and in the calls of the campaign. IGLHRC collaborated with human rights organisations such as AI, facilitating the inclusion of LGBT activists in AI's action alerts on human rights defenders at risk.

Like other WHRD-ICC members, it introduced the term 'defender' and the campaign on women human rights defenders within the organisation and also to the public through numerous meetings, public presentations and action alerts on activists at risk. IGLHRC co-sponsored a number of campaign activities, noted above, including the women human rights defenders events at WSF, CSW session, UNCHR session and AWID. It co-published the resource book on sexuality-baiting with CWGL.

IGLHRC forged a crucial link with the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, ensuring the inclusion of LGBT concerns in her mandate and facilitating on-going communication between her office and LGBT activists in emergency situations. It also prepared a briefing paper on LGBT and sexual rights defenders, which was submitted to the UN Special Representative in time for the preparation of her last report to the UNCHR before her term ends in 2006.

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

As mentioned above, ISHR organised with other WHRD-ICC members regional consultations on human rights defenders, with a special focus on women human rights defenders in Latin America and Africa. It launched the campaign in Freetown, Sierra Leone in July 2005 and in Togo in October 2005. It disseminated information on the campaign in all its activities in Latin America, Africa and Europe. It also joined the other WHRD-ICC members in organising the panel discussion on women human rights defenders at the UN CSW session in March 2005 and the UNCHR session in April 2005.

In the same UNCHR session, ISHR facilitated a joint statement on women human rights defenders issued by the WHRD-ICC and delivered at the UNCHR plenary session. It successfully lobbied with other WHRD-ICC members and Secretariat on the specific inclusion of women human rights defenders in the UNCHR resolution on human rights defenders in 2005. It also produced a manual on the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders specifically for use by women activists. The manual includes information on regional and international mechanisms that exist to protect human rights defenders.

ISIS-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE)

ISIS-WICCE concentrated on sharing information about the women human rights defenders campaign with women's networks in east and southern Africa. It raised public awareness on the concerns of women human rights defenders in Uganda and Burundi. ISIS-WICCE itself became the subject of attacks from conservative forces within Uganda for planning to show the play "Vagina Monologues". This propelled ISIS-WICCE to campaign more on the protection of women human rights defenders. It participated in a parallel event organised by the WHRD-ICC at the CSW session in March 2005 and shared its experiences of being attacked by government and church representatives in Uganda for advocating on sexuality issues.

ISIS-WICCE also joined global alerts for action on violence against women human rights defenders. It also organised an international mission on women human rights defenders with the Women's Initiatives on Gender Justice (WIGJ) in 2005 to address sexual violence especially in conflict areas in Uganda. ISIS-WICCE is planning to organise advocacy in this area as a result of the mission.

Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM)

CLADEM is a women's rights network in Latin America, a sister organisation of APWLD. It translated into Spanish and Portuguese the women human rights defenders campaign materials distributed at the WSF in Port Alegre, Brazil in January 2005. One of its representatives also participated in the panel presentation on women human rights defenders during the forum.

While CLADEM signified to join the campaign on women human rights defenders, its participation was limited by staff changes within the network in 2005. Its violence against women coordinator, who was committed to work on the campaign, fell ill and a new coordinator had to be hired to take her place. In the process, it was not feasible for CLADEM to continue active involvement in this initiative.

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML)

WLUML has been instrumental in realising the intent of the WHRD-ICC to include a focus on the well-being of women activists in the consultation agenda. So for the first time, the topic of mental health of activists was covered at an international gathering of women human rights defenders. WLUML also provided valuable counselling support for participants who needed such assistance during the consultation. Together with the Autonomous Women's Center against Sexual Violence, it is committed in exploring the development of more training and capacity tools on mental health of activists.

WLUML also provided significant inputs in the drafting of the context paper for the women human rights defenders campaign. It translated many of the campaign materials into French and facilitated translations into Arabic. It also disseminated information about the campaign

and consultation among its networks through field visits and submission of articles. It actively forwarded and supported various action alerts on women human rights defenders at risk.

World Organisation against Torture (OMCT)

OMCT mainly worked through disseminating and supporting action alerts on violence against women and human rights defenders, which also included issues of women human rights defenders. It also joined the WHRD-ICC members in organising the women human rights defenders events during the UNCHR session in April 2005. It developed capacity-building training and tools for women human rights organisations to submit alternative reports to the UN Committee against Torture and the UN Human Rights Committee, as entry points for raising women human rights defenders concerns within the mandate of these bodies.

OMCT has also continued to work towards mainstreaming issues of women human rights defenders within its own organisation. Collaborations between its violence against women programme and its programme for the protection of human rights defenders are being explored further.

WHRD-ICC Secretariat

In addition to the campaign activities carried out by WHRD-ICC member organisations singly or jointly with other members, there were also several activities coordinated by the WHRD-ICC Secretariat on behalf of the WHRD-ICC collectively. In these activities, the Secretariat takes the lead, supported by various WHRD-ICC members.

One of these activities is the development and maintenance of a website on women human rights defenders to host information on the

campaign and consultation, including and action alerts on women activists at risk. The Secretariat also produced a comprehensive campaign brochure in English, French and Spanish. It also initiated the development of the context paper for the initiative. It facilitated some of the action alerts from the networks and responded to media and queries from the public on the international campaign and consultation.

The Secretariat also organised the regular WHRD-ICC meetings, held during significant international gatherings and used as venues for WHRD-ICC members to organise women human rights defenders parallel events. It also represented the WHRD-ICC in key women's rights or human rights fora to disseminate information about the campaign and consultation and outreach to other groups and movements. These trips were also opportunities for fund raising for the initiative, which was also assumed by the Secretariat.

The WHRD-ICC Secretariat also had the responsibility of organising the international consultation in collaboration with INFORM, the local organiser. It facilitated the work of various committees, coordinated decision-making processes, prepared documentation and communication related to the event in various languages, worked out logistical arrangements with the local partners, assisted the participants and guests.

Impacts

This discussion on impacts is based on reflections regarding the intended outcomes of the campaign, as stated in the campaign plan drafted with the WHRD-ICC. The intended outcomes are as follows:

- **greater visibility of women human rights defenders and increased awareness of the**

public on women human rights defenders as a distinct category of human rights activists;

Many of the activities undertaken by the WHRD-ICC members were geared towards awareness-raising. The activities included national and regional consultations, advocacy meetings, hosting of parallel activities in key international events, production of campaign brochures, posters, T-shirts, videos, web clips and maintenance of a website. As a result, the international consultation on women human rights defenders was well attended. It drew participants from 75 countries and the participation of international and local UN and government officials. Many other groups that were not able to participate in the consultation have contacted the WHRD-ICC Secretariat of their intent to join this initiative.

Subsequent to the publicity and participation generated by the international consultation and campaign, there has been interest shown by local and other groups to include coverage on women human rights defenders in their own publications. This includes a feature on women human rights defenders in The Civil Society Watch Monthly Bulletin, South Africa; an issue of the Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) newsletter specifically devoted to women human rights defenders concerns; articles on women human rights defenders in the AWID on-line updates. The 2006 report of UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders to the UNCHR included a section on the women human rights defenders international campaign and consultation.

Rather than being subsumed under the general category of human rights defenders, many of the participants affirmed that the campaign and consultation gave a distinct focus on their

concerns as women human rights defenders. They said, "It made us aware of the gender-based violations and abuses we face and the need to address them specifically". The participants were inspired by the gathering to commit and mobilise around November 29 as international day of women human rights defenders.

Advocacy efforts also resulted in the specific mention of women human rights defenders in the UN resolution on human rights defenders in 2005; an interest from the Human Rights Department Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the European Commission on the recommendations of the consultation; and a commitment from the UN Special Representative to continue to include the specific concerns of women human rights defenders, including LGBT activists, in the mandate of her office. Moreover, as extensively discussed in the consultation, the 2006 report of the UN Special Representative carried a strong recommendation to develop "legal and normative frameworks for the accountability of non-State entities and creation of appropriate mechanisms" that will address the abuses committed by these actors against activists.

Due to the advocacy efforts by AI and other organisations, the resolution of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights in 2005 contains the first recognition that "in view of their specific role and needs, women human rights defenders should be accorded special attention to ensure that they are fully protected and effective in carrying out their important activities".

Overall, the intended outcome was achieved. The WHRD-ICC however noted that while efforts were exerted to make campaign materials accessible in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, there was lack of capacity within their respective organisations and the WHRD-ICC Secretariat to

produce campaign materials in other languages. This limited the outreach of the campaign.

■ **Enhanced understanding among human rights and other groups, governments and the UN of the specific violations against women human rights defenders;**

As the first initiative to focus on women human rights defenders, the campaign and consultation generated valuable resource tools on the subject. The WHRD-ICC drafted a comprehensive context paper, which states the rationale for highlighting the concerns of women human rights defenders and explains the calls of the campaign. As mentioned, CWGL and IGLHRC revised its publication “Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women’s Organising” to include an analysis of recent experiences of sexuality-baiting directed at women because of who they are and what they do as activists. IGLHRC submitted a briefing paper on LGBT activists and sexual rights defenders to the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders. AI also developed three theme leaflets, highlighting the risks and obstacles faced by women human rights defenders working on sexual rights, migrants and refugee rights, and the right to health.

One of the outputs from the consultation is the proceedings. It is a general reference for the public on gender-based violations and abuses against women human rights defenders, strategies for accountability and responsibility of state and non-state actors for these infractions, protection mechanisms available for women activists, and concrete recommendations for action.

The other output that complements this consultation report is a resource publication on women human rights defenders based on the

presentations made during the consultation. The production of the publication is underway, and it is intended to provide more in-depth explanations of the concept of women human rights defenders, including illustrations of specific concerns of women human rights defenders working in different regions. The publication will also include a comprehensive political assessment of the global contexts and trends that impact women human rights defenders based on the presentations of the UN Special Representative and Rapporteurs as well as key women’s rights and human rights leaders.

Aside from printed materials, videos on women human rights defenders are also being produced for public dissemination. This will include an educational video that explains the concept of women human rights defenders. There is also a short video clip that celebrates women activists’ contributions to the advocacy on human rights. As mentioned, AI also produced a video on the lives of five women human rights defenders in different regions under its ‘Stop Violence against Women’ campaign.

The process of producing these resource materials and consultation outputs according to WHRD-ICC members has resulted in “changes in perspectives” or “conceptual shifts” among them. For some, it brought attention to other sources of violations and abuses against women human rights defenders such as the family or community. This brought to fore the need to identify not only individual perpetrators, but to look into norms, traditions and contexts that bring about these violations and abuses against women activists. The focus on unpacking ‘non-state actors’ also emphasised the critical need to break the impunity of these actors and pin direct responsibility on them for harm done to women human rights defenders. The centrality of the

use of sex and sexuality as a weapon against women human rights defenders also connected the struggles of women's rights and human rights groups to the concerns of LGBT activists.

In particular, raising the issue of sexuality baiting has helped women human rights defenders to name some of the insidious abuses that exploit their sexuality. Labels such as 'lesbians', 'sexually promiscuous deviants' and other derogatory names attributed to them by colleagues and the public actually affect their activism negatively and hamper their organising on women's human rights. By identifying these abuses, sexuality-baiting becomes less of a threat to themselves and their reputations.

The impact of these resource materials in enhancing understanding among the UN, governments and other groups is yet to be seen considering that these resources have been produced recently and the campaign has only run for one year. Links have already been made with UN and government officials, with the participation in the consultation by various UN Special Rapporteurs and Representative; the chairpersons of the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission and the Violence against Women Commission in Indonesia; and other government officials. Activists from the trade union, environment and other movements were also among the participants in the consultation.

■ **greater and better protection of women human rights defenders as a result of highlighting their gender-specific concerns;**

During the consultation, participants were introduced to existing UN and regional mechanisms for the protection of women human rights defenders. ISHR produced a reference

publication on this in English, French and Spanish, which were distributed to the participants. OMCT and IGLHRC also held a workshop on prevention, alert and protection tools for women human rights defenders.

Aside from the discussions on protection mechanisms, some WHRD-ICC members such as APWLD adopted national campaigns on women human rights defenders from Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal and Philippines. The WHRD-ICC members also supported numerous action alerts from the networks. One of the successful action alerts it supported was the release of Juana Calfunao, an indigenous women and one of the participants of the consultation. She was shot, seriously wounded, then arrested shortly after the consultation for her activism on indigenous land issues in Chile. Juana has been released from prison recently.

Aside from endorsing action alerts, AI and Front Line gave direct assistance to women human rights defenders at risk under their respective programmes on human rights defenders. The WHRD-ICC Secretariat also facilitated other organisations such as Urgent Action Fund to respond to urgent requests from women activists whose cases have been the subject of action alerts received through the campaign.

The campaign and consultation also inspired participants to create and rely on their own mechanisms of protection. As Hina Jilani, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders said, "There is no better protection for women human rights defenders than the strength and support of our own movement". The participants shared and discuss during the consultation various strategies they have employed to handle arrests, ensure their personal security, and foster solidarity for their own protection. As mentioned above,

they began to form networks within their regions or areas of work as a source of protection.

This initiative also highlighted two important aspects of protection, which are seldom accorded attention: prevention and documentation.

The consultation made a mark in introducing the notion that the concept of human rights should encompass the aspect of well-being of human rights defenders, including their mental health. As demonstrated during the consultation, many of the women human rights defenders, especially those that worked in conflict situations, needed counselling support and healing sessions to help them cope with the psychological stress they face in their work. The first workshop on mental health among activists was well received, with requests from participants for more activities on this subject.

The campaign and consultation also started documentation on the specific violations against women human rights defenders. AI produced a special action-alert issue on women human rights defenders at risk under its 'Stop Violence against Women' campaign; OMCT's action alerts on violence against women also included cases of women activists at risk. This collaborative work between women's rights and human rights organisations in documenting cases of violations and abuses against women human rights defenders is a first step in extending appropriate responses for their protection. These initial efforts in documentation will be consolidated in a documentation manual on violations and abuses against women human rights defenders, which INFORM and other WHRD-ICC members will develop as a follow-up action to this initiative.

The WHRD-ICC members, however, noted that the general situation of human rights work

globally is worsening in the current political climate. Increased advocacy at national, regional and international levels have to be carried out against the criminalisation of human rights work, particularly in the guise of security measures being adopted or revived by many governments under the US-led 'war against terror'. Many of the existing protection mechanisms have to be strengthened and new ones created in order to achieve greater and better protection for women human rights defenders. Women human rights activists themselves have to be mobilised to develop strategies for their own protection.

■ **enhanced human rights defenders' capacity and tools for use in their work at the local level;**

This intended outcome was meant to capture the production of skills and tools that can enhance the work of human right defenders at the local level. Efforts were made in this aspect through various trainings for women human rights defenders, which can be replicated at local level. Front Line developed a training on security for women human rights defenders and INFORM, FORUM Asia and APWLD conducted national trainings on documentation of sexual violence in armed conflict situations for women human rights defenders.

Front Line reflected that its "protection manual need to address specific security challenges faced by women human rights defenders in an adequate way". The investigation, documentation and monitoring manual has to be developed further to address specifically cases of violations and abuses against women human rights defenders. The workshop on mental health of activists was an eye-opener, but the participants requested more follow up training and tools on this. More work has to be done to

produce and disseminate these tools on women human rights defenders and for groups to use and replicate these trainings at the local level.

■ **creation of solidarity and alliances between women’s groups, human rights organisations and other groups for the protection of women human rights defenders;**

WHRD-ICC members expressed that “working together in the campaign shaped our work differently”. One of the important gains of the campaign as earlier mentioned was the integration of both an analysis about sexuality and LGBT concerns in the agendas on women’s rights and human rights organisations in the WHRD-ICC. As noted above, the collective discussions on women human rights defenders have resulted in “cross-fertilisation of ideas and perspectives” that have enriched the analyses and strategies of WHRD-ICC members in responding to concerns of women human rights defenders.

Strategic alliances were also forged among various members, such as AI and IGHRC working together on action alerts for LGBT activists; APWLD, Forum Asia and INFORM conducted trainings together for women human rights defenders in Asia; ISHR and AI hosted regional consultations in Africa and Latin America; and many others. Largely, as mentioned above, the campaign was carried out through many joint activities undertaken by different members on behalf of the WHRD-ICC.

One significant indication of the success of these alliances is the commitment from the WHRD-ICC members to continue their collaborative work on many of the follow-up actions on the campaign. For example, INFORM will take the lead in developing the documentation manual for women

human rights defenders. APWLD, CWGL and Forum Asia have also indicated interest to work with INFORM on this. ISIS-WICCE and members of IGLHRC will pursue other venues for discussion of sexuality issues among a range of activists. ISHR is also interested to explore possible collaborations with other WHRD-ICC members in developing training on the use of international and regional protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders.

Solidarity was forged not only between the WHRD-ICC members but also among the participants. As mentioned, networks were formed during the consultation, such as the regional network among activists in former Soviet republics. Action alerts are now also disseminated through the wider network of participants. Some organisations such as Womankind and other Latin American groups have also expressed interest to be involved in working with other WHRD-ICC members to implement follow-up actions.

Membership

In terms of membership of the WHRD-ICC, the members traced the formation of the committee. This initiative was born out of initial discussions between Hina Jilani and AI, APWLD, CWGL following the recommendation from the regional consultation on women human rights defenders organised by AI, APWLD and International Women’s Rights Action Watch - Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP) to hold an international conference on women human rights defenders in 2005. AI subsequently discussed this further at a human rights defenders consultation they organised in South Africa in 2003, and Front Line coordinated the writing of a concept note in a meeting during its 2nd Platform for Human Rights Defenders in Dublin, Ireland in September 2003. A planning meeting for the initiative was organised in Geneva,

Switzerland in April 2004 and AI, APWLD, CWGL, Forum Asia, Front Line, INFORM, IGLHRC, ISHR, the International League for Human Rights (ILHR), and OMCT became members of the coordinating committee.

To ensure a balance between women's rights and human rights organisations, it was decided that WLUML, CLADEM and Amanitare will be invited to join the committee. Amanitare declined since the organisation had already planned their programs, and did not have the capacity to stretch its resources further. ISIS-WICCE joined instead, as a network for women's groups in Africa. Subsequently ILHR dropped from the membership and Indai Sajor became an individual member. It was agreed that the membership be limited at 15 members to make it manageable, including a seat for the coordinator and another seat reserved for the local organiser. Based on these considerations of ensuring balance between women rights and human rights groups and limiting the number of members to 15, the request of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) to be a member of the committee was declined.

In line with the fourth objective, this campaign was seen as an attempt to link women's rights and human rights groups to work on women human rights defenders issues. Conceptual and programmatic links have been made through this initiative as discussed under the section on impacts. However, it was observed that the membership of AI and OMCT were from the violence against women campaign or program of the respective organisations.

AI clarified that while the 'Stop Violence against Women' campaign has been the lead within AI, women human rights defenders as a concern has been mainstreamed in the organisation and integrated in its human rights defenders' program.

The human rights defenders' program of AI nominated the participants to the consultation and provided staff and financial support. OMCT also explained that women human rights defenders' concerns were also integrated into "The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders"; a joint program of OMCT and FIDH.

In general, the WHRD-ICC members noted that the membership included a "good mix of local, regional and international organisations" and a satisfactory balance in the representation of women's rights and human rights organisations. However, it was suggested that there is a need in the future for a broader outreach to other key international human rights and other organisations working specifically on human rights defenders.

Coordination

The WHRD-ICC members at the evaluation meeting affirmed that "there was good coordination overall" and the initiative was a "cooperative venture" among the different organisations. There were some lapses in communication since many of the members were extremely busy with organisational work, individual commitments and some missed emails, but the WHRD-ICC pointed out that they were "satisfied" with the coordination.

The members also noted that the exchange within the committee "integrated conceptual discussion and thinking" on women human rights defenders. As one member wrote, "we have benefited hugely from the engagement and exchange with the other partners and we have learned a lot that we will feed into our on-going work on human rights defenders". Many of them reflected that the interaction has enriched them conceptually on issues related to women human rights defenders, and have given them ideas on how to further work on this subject.

The members also remarked that the WHRD-ICC meetings were “well-paced” and in between meetings, there were sufficient on-line discussions to make decisions. The coordination efforts of the Secretariat facilitated many of the decision-making processes. It also ensured that many of the planned activities by the WHRD-ICC were carried out and the administration of the campaign worked smoothly. The Secretariat also assumed responsibility for fund-raising for the initiative.

Having a coordinator to work full time on the campaign and consultation worked well, according to the members. Although one member wrote that there might have been “a very heavy burden on the coordinator”; it was concluded that there was sufficient support from WHRD-ICC members, who shared the various tasks. WHRD-ICC members also provided resources to the Secretariat: APWLD hosted it, and shared its staff and facilities to assist the coordinator; AI contributed funds to the Secretariat and sponsored one of the interns; OMCT, CWGL, and AI hosted the various WHRD-ICC meetings and provided logistical support and facilities. Most of the members also participated in the WHRD-ICC events with their own organisational funds and assisted in implementing various WHRD-ICC activities.

The WHRD-ICC members also reflected that having a specific goal for the formation of the international coordinating committee made it work. Rather than forming a long-term coalition, it was clear to all the members that the WHRD-ICC was specifically to implement the campaign and consultation. This clarified expectations among the members and minimised complex interactions between the different organisations.

Three : Follow-Up Actions

The WHRD-ICC was formed specifically to coordinate the campaign until the international consultation on women human rights defenders. At the evaluation meeting, the WHRD-ICC decided to dissolve the committee as planned. It was clarified, however, that follow-up actions on the campaign will be carried out by various WHRD-ICC members individually or in collaboration with other organisations.

With the dissolution of the committee, the WHRD-ICC Secretariat will also cease to operate by April 2006, after completion of all reports. Follow-up activities will be coordinated by lead organisations, which pledged to take on various responsibilities. For example, INFORM will coordinate the production of the documentation manual; APWLD will take on the maintenance of the women human rights defenders website. The intent is to integrate campaign activities in the programmatic work of various women's rights, human rights and other organisations.

Below is a list of concrete actions suggested by participants and the WHRD-ICC. The list is derived from the specific suggestions of WHRD-ICC members during the evaluation meeting and from recommendations of the participants during the closing plenary of the consultation.

To date, a number of these activities are already being carried out. For example, many of the WHRD-ICC members have been active in the lobby efforts around UN reform. The on-line discussion on sexuality and sexual rights defenders has started with APWLD, CWGL, OMCT, and ISHR participating in it. The video shown at the opening plenary of the consultation was finalised in time for a March 8 campaign to include women human rights defenders.

Preparations were also made for parallel events on women human rights defenders at the CSW session in March 2006 and the UNCHR session in April 2006.

The activities are enumerated according to general strategies, although many of them have multiple approaches that cut across the current listing. The WHRD-ICC members that signified to work on these plans are indicated below. As the list indicates, many of the actions are proposed to be joint activities among different WHRD-ICC members.

Awareness-Raising and Advocacy Activities

- participation in annual international events such as the CSW session, UNCHR session, WSF, and others (CWGL, APWLD, ISHR and other WHRD-ICC members);
- integration of women human rights defenders issues in reports submitted to UN treaty bodies, such as the Committee against Torture, Human Rights Committee, and others (AI, OMCT);
- a report in 2006 focusing on specific challenges facing women human rights defenders (Front Line, Urgent Action Fund);
- regular regional Asia-Pacific consultation with the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders (Forum Asia);
- maintenance of women human rights defenders website (APWLD);
- production and dissemination of media materials on women and human rights defenders (AI);
- creation of women human rights defenders awards or incorporation in existing ones, such as the Martin Ennals Awards (AI, ISHR, Forum Asia, OMCT);
- participation in advocacy efforts on UN

reform, including the debates on the Human Rights Council to ensure the mandate of the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders (AI, APWLD, ISHR, CWGL, INFORM, Forum Asia, OMCT)

- refinement of advocacy strategy by “campaigning with care”;
- lobby for a specific UN or international instrument on women human rights defenders;
- refining regional human rights defenders mechanisms such as the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa to include concerns of women human rights defenders and specific ways to protect them (AI, ISHR);

Capacity-Building Training and Tools

- regular regional human rights consultations or trainings of respective organisations to include a component on women human rights defenders (ISHR, Forum Asia);
- training on protection mechanisms for human rights defenders specifically for women human rights activists (ISHR);
- mental health workshop for women human rights activists in Algeria (WLUML, Autonomous Women’s Center against Sexual Violence);
- further development of the publication “Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women’s Organizing” as a resource tool for women human rights defenders (CWGL);
- global leadership training on intergenerational issues to include women human rights defenders concerns (CWGL);
- security training to integrate women human rights defenders concerns (Front Line);
- follow up on-line discussions on sexuality and sexual rights defenders issues (CWGL, ISIS-WICCE);

- development of research related to women human rights defenders concerns (AI);
- development of training for law enforcement authorities and other government officials on women human rights defenders;
- translation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in different languages (APWLD);
- national and local discussions and workshops on the results of the international consultation on women human rights defenders.

Prevention and Protection Mechanisms

- current documentation of violence against women and human rights violations to include cases on violations and abuses against women human rights defenders (AI, OMCT);
- global human rights defenders project to include a component on women human rights defenders (AI);
- documentation manual and training on violations and abuses against women human rights defenders (INFORM, CWGL, APWLD, Forum Asia);
- action alerts on women human rights defenders (AI, APWLD, Front Line, WLUML, OMCT);
- drafting of guidelines on women human rights defenders to address violations and abuses within human rights as well as other movements;

Mobilisation and Solidarity Networks

- celebration of November 29 as Women Human Rights Defenders day; (CWGL will explore how to integrate this proposal within the 16 Days of Activism campaign);
- an international event on women human rights defenders in 2008 to mark the 60th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights (INFORM, Forum Asia and other WHRD-ICC members);

- possible collaborations with other mainstream human rights organisations (AI, OMCT);
- collaboration between LGBT groups and other organisations on action alerts for sexuality rights defenders and other LGBT concerns (CWGL, ISIS-WICCE, OMCT);
- international cross-cultural institute to be expanded beyond Africa and to include women human rights defenders component (ISIS-WICCE and other WHRD-ICC members);
- regional networks for the protection of women human rights defenders.

Annex 1 : Summary of Participants' Written Evaluation

Synthesis of evaluation forms handed in by 97 Participants of the International Consultation on Women Human Rights Defenders

1. Which were the most often cited objectives met? (Remark: Most participants understood these as their own objectives and expectations vis-à-vis the consultation, not so much as the consultation's objectives per se)
 - Better understanding of the concept of WHRDs
 - Analysis of difficulties encountered by WHRDs
 - Themes announced in Plenary 1 were properly addressed
 - Sharing of knowledge and experiences
 - Set-up of (concrete) strategies for future action
 - Better understanding of international human rights mechanisms protecting WHRDs
 - Integration of LGBT issues in the human rights agenda
 - Networks created during the consultation
 - Plurality of issues and participation
2. Most useful activities (most often cited first)
 - Break-out sessions
 - Plenary
 - Security training
 - Caucuses
 - Social events
 - Meeting with Hina

Some comments made by participants in relation to break-out sessions

- Concrete assessment of used strategies by participants

- Sharing of information and experiences
- Opportunity to interact with each other
- Proposals for strategies (campaigns) for the future

Some comments made by participants in relation to plenary

- Better understanding of the objectives of the consultation
- Sharing of information and experiences
- Capacity-building
- No time for Q&A

3. Least useful activities (most often cited first)
 - Video-showing
 - Caucuses
 - Social events
 - Regional workshops
 - Plenary (lack of interaction)
4. Most common logistical successes (most often cited first)
 - Transportation arrangements
 - Welcoming
 - Translation in several languages (assessment came from those English-speaking participants, who did not need simultaneous translation)
 - Personal assistance
5. Most common logistical complaints (most often cited first)
 - Technical deficiencies in translation
 - Lack of information on videos and monolingual video-showing (more specifically in the tribute to WHRDs)
 - Lack of information and background documentation prior to the consultation:

- provide information on plenary/ workshops' speakers [internet websites of their organisations]
- distribution of workshops guidance papers to the participants in advance
- Heaviness of the programme (too many issues)
- Provide list of participants before the conference

6. Follow-up actions planned after the consultation

- Dissemination of the UN Declaration on HRDs (i.e., translation into other languages than already existing ones) and international protection mechanisms (i.e., EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders)
- Awareness raising on the issue of WHRDs
- Dissemination of the results of the consultation (i.e., articles in the local press)
- Regional and national consultations on WHRDs
- Capacity-building/ training activities for WHRDs including on international human rights mechanisms
- Inclusion of the issue of WHRDs in future training activities
- Build-up of networks (including for information sharing, urgent action and emergency assistance for WHRDs)
- Documentation and follow-up of cases of WHRDs
- Use of international mechanisms to denounce violations against LGBT, sexual and reproductive rights defenders

7. Other relevant comments

- Setting up of a follow-up committee playing the role of a focal point for WHRDs
- Creating an International Day in support of WHRDs
- Organising consultations on WHRDs on a regular basis (i.e., every three years)
- Creating an award for WHRDs
- Integration of LGBT's concerns: welcomed by some, criticised by others who perceived the issue as overly addressed
- Lack of representation of particular issues and situations such as:
 - authoritarian repressive regimes
 - minorities
 - land rights WHRDs
 - Caribbean region's specificities/ lack of representation in the consultation

Compiled by Anne-Laurence Lacroix and Mariana Duarte, OMCT

Annex 2 : Samples of Press Coverage on Women Human Rights Defenders

Women activists world over face threats

by Zanita Careem

“Every day activists across the world suffer serious abuses in the course of their work as women human rights defenders. Many women have already paid with their lives for their courage and commitment to the defence of human rights,” says Sunila Abeysekera, Director of INFORM (Sri Lanka), and a member of the international coordinating committee behind the first-ever global gathering of women human rights defenders in Colombo this week.

“Women activists working in all parts of the world face particular risks in their political organizing. Our advocacy often results in gender-related abuses including rape, psychiatric incarceration, and restrictions on access to rights of expression and association. Yet these violations are frequently not recognized or validated. This meeting has challenged that invisibility and celebrated the efforts of women human rights defenders around the world.”

The conference closed today in Colombo, Sri Lanka after four days of historic coalition building between women’s rights and human rights activists. It brought together an international group of 200 women human rights defenders, including women who defend a range of human rights, and men who defend women’s human rights. Delegates shared experiences and developed a range of strategies to combat the violence, discrimination and other abuses they experience specifically because of their gender and because of their work in defence of human rights.

The meeting focused on four separate sources of abuses commonly experienced by women human rights defenders. These included state-based violence and issues of accountability and justice; the growing rise in fundamentalist movements seeking and gaining political power; the use of sexuality-based attacks to intimidate women and harm their bodies and reputations; and the need to address abuse perpetrated by communities and families.

Mary Jane Real from the Secretariat of the consultation’s coordinating committee comments: “Over the past four days women human rights defenders have shared a wide range of experiences, and worked to seek responses to the abuses we face. From policies and practices that

regulate women’s sexuality, to restrictions on our work because of misuse of counter-terrorism efforts, we have outlined the nature and depth of these violations as they apply to all of us. And we have identified and discussed campaigning strategies that are available to help us put an end to the abuse of women human rights defenders worldwide in the course of our activism.”

Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International and a speaker at today’s closing public event, says: “All of us — women and men — must demand the protection of those who defend women’s rights and women who defend all human rights, insist on justice when they are attacked, and fight for them to be given the recognition they are due.” The consultation has defined key priorities, as well as a range of action points: — It is vital that individual states are held accountable for abuses of women human rights defenders at the hands of all state and non-state actors within their jurisdiction. This includes both fundamentalist and paramilitary groups, as well as communities and individuals responsible for these violations.

All activists should call on governments worldwide to ensure the mandate of the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, a position currently held by Hina Jilani, is continued in order to maintain UN and governmental focus on women human rights defenders.

Conference participants commit to maintaining solidarity, enhancing coalition-building efforts and networking within and across regions, and to creating and strengthening regional and international standards for the protection of women human rights defenders worldwide.

Other speakers at the press conference included:

Charlotte Bunch, Center for Women’s Global Leadership, USA

Lydia Cacho, CIAM, Crisis Center for Women, Mexico.

Tider Kumichii, Ndichia, Global Education and Environment Development Foundation, Cameroon

Radhia Nasroui, Association for the Fight Against Torture in Tunisia, Tunisia,

Zenaida Soriano, Amihan, Philippines
Leyla Yunus, Institute for Peace and Democracy, Azerbaijan.

Women Human Rights Defenders

By Alys Francis

Activists, NGO's and human rights defenders gathered in Colombo last week, to join together for the International Consultation on Women Human Rights Defenders.

The week long event aimed to tear open the curtains and throw the spotlight not only on women's human rights, but the women who dedicate their lives to defending them.

With her back to the window, Hina Jilani's small rounded frame demands respect. Ms Jilani, UN Special Representative to the Secretary General on human rights defenders, spearheaded the consultation with a coalition of NGO's. As she spoke steadily about the issues women face and the action that needs to be taken, her passion for the cause can be heard in the rise and fall of her voice.

Ms Jilani hoped the consultation will give people a better understanding of the situation women human rights defenders face. And with roughly 48 percent of human rights defenders being women it is hardly a minority group.

So what exactly are the issues? Basically, Ms Jilani says, women human rights defenders are restricted by the social and cultural stereotypes that everyday women have to face. The expectations society

has that women should be subservient and dedicated to raising children and running the home do not gel with the image of a woman standing up for her rights at a protest and writing letters to government officials.

As Ms Jilani says, women are not expected to be in the public domain, they are not expected to be outside their homes and working independently like these women are. And because the work of a human rights defender involves publicly challenging stereotypes and government policy, their work can provoke a backlash from their community and they can fall victim to violence and redress in their working lives and even at home among their own families.

Fatima Burnad Nateson began defending human rights in India when she was 11 years old, to

help a child laborer who was being mistreated by her owner. Because of her work defending human rights, Ms Nateson has been threatened by police, politicians and religious fundamentalist groups. When she challenged the cultural practice "Mathamma" (where Dalit-caste girls who fall ill are cured by the goddess Mathamma and required to marry her once they reach puberty) and likened it to religious-sanctioned prostitution, she received threats.

The wall of social and cultural stereotypes blocking women human rights defender's from their work is not the only issue. An even more insidious problem is violence against women. Again, this is an issue every day women face, in fact some human rights defenders began defending human rights after experiencing violence

themselves. But for women human rights defenders the risk of violence is magnified by the public hands-on nature of their work that means they have to visit dangerous places and walk down the dark alleys most women can avoid.

Ms Jilani says one of the causes of violence against women is negative social trends and cultural practices. She says stopping violence against women is not a question of changing culture but dissociating the practices harmful to culture. She says politicians and elite member of society resist addressing the issue because they have an interest in using violence to control women based on the old patriarchal social structure.

Ms Jilani says violence against women needs to be recognized and legal and policy measures put in place to protect women. While Ms



Rally for the launch of the campaign at the Asian Women's Human Rights Forum, December 2004, Bangkok, Thailand

Jilani diplomatically will not comment specifically on Sri Lanka during the consultation, she says developing countries generally have traditional systems and legal codes that are deficient in protecting women from violence.

Domestic violence is a prolific problem. Statistics from Oxfam say 60 percent of Sri Lankan women are subject to domestic violence and the Sri Lanka police saw 2,155 reported cases of domestic violence in 2003. The problem, Ms Jilani says, is some governments excuse domestic violence as a private matter where the State has no place intervening. "There are weak governments that do not want to shake the status quo," she says. While governments have seen reason to invade the private domain in the name of terrorism, claiming a 'duty to protect', they are unwilling to do so to protect women from violence. But Ms Jilani says the State does have a duty to intervene and protect the thousands of women who suffer extremely serious injuries at the hands of their own family.

While Ms Jilani is determined to effect change, the consultation is just one step of many needed, and while she is calling for immediate action she is realistic. "It takes time for societies to abolish negative social trends but the steps to creating tolerance are important".

Ms Jilani is unfazed by addressing ingrained negative cultural practices. She says if certain behavior is promoted as a crime it will very quickly change. "People won't kill if they know they will be punished," says Ms Jilani.

Currently however, in some places, the law allows people to get away with it. This is what the men and women gathering in the Taj Samudra Hotel are hoping to change.

The consultation is calling for four things:

- 1) Recognition of women human rights defenders
- 2) Resistance to State violence
- 3) Responsibility of non-State actors (such as militia groups)
- 4) Realization of human rights for all

As the assembled journalists listen to Ms Jilani speaking at the first press conference in the consultations schedule, it is clear the first step has been taken with the issues being brought into the light. It does not hurt that the consultation is running alongside Oxfam's 16 day 'WE CAN' campaign alliance to end violence against women. But what happens to women's human rights, and the individuals who fight for them, now depends on whether people take action and how far the ripples from Ms Jilani's stone spread.

Annex 3 : Women Human Rights Defenders' International Coordinating Committee



Amnesty International (AI)

www.amnesty.org

AI is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognised human rights to be respected and protected. It is concerned with the impartial protection of human rights, envisioning a world in which every person enjoys all the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards. On 5 March 2004, it launched the Stop Violence against Women campaign, which focuses on violence against women in the family and in conflict. In partnership with women's organisations and other groups, it seeks to address discrimination as a root cause of violence against women and intends to take action on behalf of particular individuals to stop these violations. Through this campaign, AI has developed and used campaign tools to highlight the profiles and cases of WHRDs.



APWLD

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

www.apwld.org

APWLD is a network of lawyers, academics, social scientists, grassroots women and other activists from across Asia Pacific. It aims to promote women's human rights enshrined in the UN international human rights instruments and to enable women in the region to use law as an instrument of change for equality, justice and development. With a membership of close to 150 individuals and organisations, it operates through task forces than run programmes on women's human rights, violence against women, women's participation in political processes, labour and migration, women and environment and rural and indigenous women. It has recently adopted a campaign on women human rights defenders, focusing on the concerns of its activist-members facing threats and violations as WHRDs.



Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM ASIA)

www.forum-asia.org

FORUM ASIA is a membership-based regional human rights organisation in Asia with 36 member organisations in 14 countries in the region. It strives to empower people by advocating social justice, sustainable human development, participatory democracy, gender equality, peace and human security through collaboration and cooperation among human rights organisations in the region. It has a programme on human's defenders, which aims to protect human rights activists and practitioners by supporting their work and strengthening both domestic and international human rights protection mechanisms in accordance with established human rights standards and norms.



Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

www.cwgl.rutgers.edu

CWGL at Douglass College, Rutgers University seeks to develop an understanding of the ways in which gender affects the exercise of power and the conduct of public policy internationally. The Center's goals are to build international linkages among women in local leadership that enhance their effectiveness, expand their global consciousness and develop coordinated strategies for action; to promote visibility of women and feminist perspectives in public deliberation and policy-making globally; and to increase participation of women in national and international governing bodies and processes. The Center conducts various activities that support women's leadership and transformative visions as crucial in every policy area, and develops effective policy alternatives which demand the full inclusion of gender perspectives and women in all decision-making processes and requires an understanding of how gender relates to race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and culture. Together with the IGLHRC, it recently released a report "Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women's Organizing".



Front Line

www.frontlinedefenders.org

Front Line is an international foundation for the protection of human rights defenders, defending those who champion the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its main focus is on human rights defenders at risk, either temporarily or permanently because of their work. It aims to address some of the needs identified by defenders themselves, including protection, networking, training and access to the thematic

and country mechanisms of the UN and other regional bodies. Every two years, it hosts “The Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders”, which provides an opportunity for human rights defenders worldwide to come together to exchange experiences and discuss relevant issues. The 3rd Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders held last 13 – 15 October 2005 included a focus on WHRDs.

INFORM

INFORM

INFORM is a Sri Lankan human rights organisation with a special focus on monitoring, documentation and networking. It also functions as a library and documentation centre for journalists, students and others seeking information regarding the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. It is the local host of the International Consultation on Women Human Rights Defenders.



International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)

www.iglhrc.org

IGLHRC works to secure the full enjoyment of the human rights of all people and communities subject to discrimination or abuse on the basis of sexual orientation or expression, gender identity or expression, and/or HIV status. A US-based non-profit, non-governmental organisation, IGLHRC engages in advocacy, documentation, coalition building, public education, and technical assistance. Particularly, it helps educate its constituencies about human rights and sexual orientation/gender identity. It co-published with CWGL the report “Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women’s Organizing”.



International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

www.ishr.ch

ISHR is an international association that promotes the effective protection of human rights defenders and aims to empower human rights organisations and individuals to access and use human rights mechanisms at regional, national and international levels.. It services human rights defenders by providing analytical reports on the UN human rights mechanisms, training on how to use the

international norms and procedures, strategic advice for effective lobbying, contributions to human rights standard-setting, practical information and logistical support to enable human rights defenders to take full advantage of international human rights law and procedures.



ISIS Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE)

www.isis.or.ug

ISIS-WICCE is a global action oriented women's resource centre with the aim of promoting justice and women's human rights through documentation of women's realities and sharing of information and ideas to improve women's status and overcome gender inequality. Since its relocation in Kampala, Uganda, it has focused on building women's capacity in documentation, peace building and conflict resolution; and the use of information and communication technologies for networking, lobbying and advocacy. It has been the subject of harassment from conservative forces in Uganda as a member of the V Day Host Committee that planned to stage the play "The Vagina Monologues" by Eve Ensler.



Cladem

COMITÉ DE AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE PARA
LA DEFENSA DE LOS DERECHOS DE LA MUJER

The Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM)

www.cladem.org

CLADEM is a network of women's organisations and individuals united to achieve the effective defense of women's rights in Latin America and the Caribbean. It engages in various activities for the promotion of women's rights such as: formulating legislative proposals, research, training, informing, communicating and exercising solidarity actions. Like APWLD, it is a regional network that empowers women to use law as a tool for change.

Women living under muslim laws
النساء في ظل قوانين المسلمين
Femmes sous lois musulmanes

Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML)

www.wluml.org

WLUML is an international solidarity network that provides information, support and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam. The network demands for women's equality and their rights, especially in Muslim contexts. It aims to increase the autonomy of women by supporting their local struggles from within Muslim countries and communities and linking them with feminist and progressive groups at large; facilitating interaction, exchanges and contacts, and providing information as well as serving as a channel of communication.



World Organisation against Torture (OMCT)

www.omct.org

OMCT is an international coalition of over 260 NGOs in 85 countries, including the SOS-Torture Network, fighting against torture, arbitrary detention, summary and extra judicial executions, forced disappearances and all other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. In response to the increasing number of cases on gender-specific forms of violence, OMCT established in 1996 the Violence against Women (VAW) Programme, which addresses and analyses the gender-related causes and consequences of torture and other forms of violence against women. The OMCT VAW Programme issues urgent appeals concerning gender-based violence; submits alternative country reports on violence against women to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; and mainstreams a gender perspective into the work of the UN treaty monitoring bodies. It has issued and supported urgent appeals on WHRDs.

*Recognition of women human rights defenders;
Resistance to State violence
Responsibility by non-State actors
Realization of all human rights for all!*

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