1991 WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE REPORT

WOMEN, VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

We say no to violence against women
Rape
Sexual Harassment
Domestic Violence
Stalking
Sex Tourism
Pornography
Leprosy
AIDS

Is a health issue

Compulsory Sterilization
Genital Mutilation
 Acid Burn
Female Genital Surgery

Is a violation of human rights

CENTER FOR WOMEN'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP
1991
WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE
REPORT

WOMEN,
VIOLENCE
AND HUMAN
RIGHTS

CENTER FOR WOMEN'S
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP
DOUGLASS COLLEGE,
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION:
THE CENTER'S GOALS
AND CONCEPT OF
THE INSTITUTE

The Center for Women's Global Leadership was founded as a project of Douglass College, Rutgers University in 1989. It seeks to deepen an understanding of the way in which gender affects the exercise of power and the conduct of public policy globally. Its mandate is to:

- promote the visibility of women and of feminist perspectives in public policy decision making and implementation globally;
- increase women's participation in local and national governments as well as international agencies;
- build international linkages among women in local leadership that enhance their effectiveness and expand their global consciousness.

The Center pursues these objectives through a variety of programs including an annual two week residential Women's Leadership Institute; global education events throughout the year; visiting associates; strategic planning activities; publications and a resource center. The first Women’s Leadership Institute, held in June 1991, is the subject of this report.

Over the past two decades, encouraged by the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985), female leaders have worked through community-based and popular movements to formulate alternative policies in areas ranging from housing and health care to national security. Typically, however, these efforts are hampered by women’s lack of institutional power and are ignored in the policymaking process which is still largely controlled by men. Thus women leaders are obstructed in their efforts to effectively advance their agendas in the public policy sphere. The programs of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership aim to assist women in their efforts to overcome this structural injustice.
The Center views women’s leadership as vital to ending female subordination and to formulating more effective responses to world problems. We approach the issue of leadership as both one of advancing individual women as leaders and of advancing women’s collective leadership on policy issues. We therefore seek to provide opportunities for diverse women who are leaders at the local level to come together to expand their skills, to make contacts, and to develop strategies globally. We also work to make more visible the leadership that women as a group have taken in providing new perspectives and approaches to public policy issues that are often ignored at the global level. Women’s leadership and feminist transformative perspectives on all issues are needed today in order to create alternative policies to those that have proven ineffective to meet the problems faced by our societies.

WHY AN INSTITUTE ON WOMEN, VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS?

The Center’s first three year program is organized around a specific theme—Women, Violence and Human Rights—in order to address women’s leadership from a concrete standpoint, rather than abstractly. We see this topic as a critical area where women’s leadership is essential but not yet well-organized internationally. No government determines its policies toward other countries on the basis of their treatment of women, and the human rights community has generally ignored the massive violations of gender violence. Yet sex discrimination and violence are often matters of life and death as reflected in the higher malnutrition rates of girls than boys in many countries, or, in the reality of domestic violence as the leading cause of injury to women worldwide.

We also chose this focus on Gender Violence and Human Rights because it crosses national, class, racial, age, and ethnic lines. At the same time, this issue illustrates how these factors are intertwined with the subordination of women and it intersects with almost every other concern, such as militarism, racism, economic exploitation, the health crisis, etc. As women’s local organizing against violence in its many forms has grown rapidly throughout the world over the past decade, there is much women can learn from each other’s efforts. For while violence takes different forms according to its cultural context, the problem exists everywhere and working on it offers unique opportunities to build bridges across cultures, to learn from both similarities and differences, and to link strategies globally.

In every region, women are now focusing public debate on issues of gender violence and human rights. In response to the local initiatives of women, the international community is slowly recognizing the systemic nature of the issue and interest is growing in the topic of women’s rights as human rights. For example, in February 1989, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted a resolution calling on countries to report on national legislation to protect women from violence and asked its secretariat to study the problem. Since that time, other United Nations agencies as well as a few governments and non-governmental organizations have begun to recognize the importance of gender based violence to the issues of equality, development, and human rights.

The Women’s Leadership Institute was intended to strengthen women’s leadership in this area and to give it a more coordinated international focus. It was designed to provide
opportunities for individual women leaders from different regions around the world to exchange experiences and to look for global responses that complement their local actions. The Institute also sought to advance women’s collective leadership so that their diverse voices can be channeled to forge a feminist transformation of perspectives on all global issues—not just on “women’s issues.” The Institute addressed questions of how to increase women’s power, to assist female leaders in the formulation of policy alternatives on these issues, and to strategize about ways to ensure that women’s perspectives are included in public debates.

BACKGROUND TO THE INSTITUTE

The first year of the Center’s existence (1989-1990) was spent in planning and development of the idea. This included fund-raising and discussing the Center with others in and out of the University and from around the world. The highlight of this process was an International Planning Meeting held May 28-31, 1990 to ensure input into the Center’s direction from other countries at an early stage. We invited 21 women from diverse regions and projects who have considerable experience in their countries in the areas of violence and human rights and/or have been engaged in women’s leadership development nationally to advise us. The participants evaluated the projected programs of the Center with an eye to what activities would most assist local groups in their area and what would have the greatest impact in shaping how the international community approaches these issues. They discussed questions that the Center should consider as priorities throughout its work, such as how to make violence against women seen as a public policy issue linked to other national priorities, like development and peace.

The International Planning Meeting considered the problem of women, violence and human rights on several levels. First, each participant reported on work being done to address violence in her region and what aspects of the problem seemed most urgent there. Second, the group looked at violence against women as an individual and family issue and discussed how it can be understood more as a major political question for society. Finally, four working groups proposed strategies around violence against women as it relates to four areas: peace and militarism; development and

multi-national corporations; cultural, racial and religious fundamentalism; and human rights. These discussions served as a guideline for shaping the sessions at the first leadership institute.

The participants also defined the Center’s unique role as a cross-cultural catalyst for expanding the exploration of conceptual and practical concerns about gender violence and human rights at the international level. The focus on this topic was seen as timely, since there is both an increasing need for global coordination around gender violence and an emerging awareness of the need for women’s voices in discussions of human rights. Given the early stages of these developments, the Center could play a critical part in helping to frame public policy debates and in bringing attention to the vital role women play as leaders in this area. The leadership institute was seen as an important vehicle for this work.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The first Women’s Global Leadership Institute was held June 3-15, 1991 with 23 participants drawn from many fields - lawyers, policymakers, teachers, health care workers, researchers, journalists, and activists. (See list and descriptions of their work in Appendix A.) Following the advice of our international planning meeting, the first Institute was small and participants were required to commit themselves to stay for the entire two week period. This amount of time and commitment was crucial to having an in-depth cross-cultural experience where people were able to build trust, learn from each other, and develop strategies together. At the same time, we limited it to only a two week period (including time for travel) so that women with busy schedules and families would find it conceivable to take off time to come.

In order to learn more about who might be doing this work and go beyond our personal networks, the application process for the Institute was open. We mailed announcements of the Institute with an application form to about 2000 groups and individuals around the world, including women’s media, asking them to spread the word. We received over 200 applications primarily from Asia, Africa, and Latin America where we had concentrated our outreach. The staff then reviewed the applications and consulted with our international advisory committee and other regional contacts in order to select the most appropriate participants.

Our criteria centered on bringing women who were local leaders with at least two years experience in women’s organizing but who had not necessarily had much international exposure. We also wanted women who could be expected-based on their previous work or their organizations— to share their experience with others in their regions and to multiply the institute’s impact. We sought a regional balance as well as a mixture of professions and of women working in both women’s projects and with human rights groups. Further, the Institute was focused on the political and policy implications of gender violence and human rights and not primarily on services, so we wanted women with experience and interest in this area. Finally we wanted women with varying levels of expertise, both older and emerging leaders, but all of whom had demonstrated a cooperative leadership style.

The decisions proved difficult as there were three times as many good applicants as we could accommodate, and we realized how few such opportunities exist for women internationally.
Eventually we selected 23 participants from around the world: 6 from Asia and the Pacific; 5 from Latin America and the Caribbean; 4 from Africa and the Middle East; 3 from East and West Europe; and 5 North Americans with diverse backgrounds as part of our commitment to global education of women within our own region. In addition, several women from outside of the US were part of the staff and organizing team for the Institute which contributed significantly to its global flavor. (See lists in Appendix B.)

Prior to the Institute, participants were sent background materials for the sessions and asked to fill out a questionnaire on their interests, skills, and expectations for the Institute. While they were not required to write formal papers, they were asked to discuss the materials and questions with other women in their projects and to prepare with them materials they would bring to the Institute to demonstrate the work and ideas from their region. This provided a means of focusing on the topic and involving others in the experience as well as ensuring that resources from around the world were available at the Institute.

THE PROCESS AND AGENDA OF THE INSTITUTE

The two weeks of the Institute included full group plenaries, workshops, skills sessions, panels with outside resource people, and public events. Throughout the Institute participants explored gender violence in all its dimensions with a major focus on developing strategies for change, going beyond the academic seminar format of simply exchanging views at a theoretical level. The issues and skills addressed were based on the work of the Center over the past two years, the ideas expressed at the International Planning Meeting in 1990, and the suggestions and strengths of the selected participants. While outside resource people were invited for specific sessions, the participants themselves were the primary resources.

The agenda had three phases. The initial three days were internal, open to only the participants and the Center organizing team, who shared experiences, discussed projects and problems, and exchanged organizing strategies. This initial stage of the Institute provided a crucial time to build a sense of trust, explore common purposes, and define the group’s priorities.

This process began with the Center’s description of our goals, expectations and agenda for the Institute. Each participant then gave a presentation of the issues of violence and human rights in her region, the work of her organization, and her expectations for the Institute. On the second day, Charlotte Bunch, Director of the Center, presented our theoretical framework for approaching gender violence and human rights which was the basis for how the topics of the Institute were organized.

The rest of this phase consisted of a plenary and several workshops led by participants which focused on “Organizing and Developing Policies and Education to End Gender Violence.” The Center for Anti-Violence Education/Brooklyn Women’s Martial Arts also led the group in a self-defense demonstration and discussion of community efforts to prevent violence; this provided an occasion to move our bodies after days of talking as well as to introduce the participants to this type of community work.

The middle phase of the Institute consisted of four days with selected outside resource people who joined us in discussions of gender violence as related to four broad themes: “Human Rights and International Law,” “Development, Militarism, and the State,” “Race, Culture,
Religion and Family,” and “Women’s Health and Sexuality.” The resource people generally came for the whole day. They were women who had worked with the Center from the University, from the wider NJ-NY-DC area, or from other countries but in the US at the time of the Institute. (See list in Appendix B). Each morning began with a panel on the day’s subject consisting of both outside resource people and participants with expertise in that area, followed by a plenary discussion. In the afternoon, we met in small groups on topics that emerged out of the issues raised during the morning. While most working groups developed specific strategies, some worked on further defining the issues, and a few were skills sessions with resource people in specific areas like feminist therapy. Each group designated a note taker and a discussion leader and reported back the group’s conclusions at the end of the day.

The final four-day phase of the Institute sought to solidify the group’s work and prepare it for presentation to the public. A primary theme discussed in this phase was feminist organizing, structures, process and leadership. Based on the trust built in the group and the problems that had been revealed in previous sessions, the group chose to discuss issues such as the use of the term “feminist” and problems of power and leadership in women's groups. In addition, Ruth Mandel, Director of the Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers, presented their work on the issues of women in public leadership. This led to a lively discussion of women in politics and how to both encourage more women to run for public office and create conditions so that they represent the concerns of women at the grass roots once there.

During this time, we looked at the interrelation of the main themes and how to work on them cross-culturally including discussion of international networking and the relationship between local groups and global projects. Throughout the Institute, women who worked with other networks, such as IWRAW (International Women’s Rights Action Watch) and ISIS International or had attended international events on this topic, such as those held by The Global Fund for Women and Match International, shared their experiences and provided information on these resources. In addition we compiled a list of such networks and a calendar of national, regional, and international events, days, and years related to the themes of violence and human rights. The group also discussed follow-up work that it hoped the Center would undertake, such as coordination of the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence” campaign described in the conclusion to this report.

Throughout the Institute participants shared practical skills that would enhance their work. In this final phase, special sessions were held in areas requested by some, such as fundraising, the use of computers for networking, and hands-on training in the use of video.

Finally, each participant chose an area in which she wanted to do more in depth work. Small groups further developed strategies and prepared a report for the conclusions of the Institute in the areas selected: Education, Health, Human Rights, Development, and the Law. The final day of the Institute was spent presenting working group reports, providing feedback which was subsequently incorporated into the groups’ reports, and evaluating the Institute.

Two public events were also held to introduce participants to the New Jersey and New York communities. An International Women’s Speak-Out entitled No More Violence:
INTRODUCTION

Women Claim their Human Rights was held on June 7th at the Douglass College Student Center for the Rutgers and New Jersey communities. Seven of the participants from diverse regions spoke about work in their countries, and local women's organizations were invited to display their materials and let participants know about their work. On June 14th in New York, we held a reporting session for representatives from the UN, foundations, and non-governmental women's, human rights, and development organizations. We described the work of the Institute and introduced the participants who then presented the conclusions of the final five working groups. Those attending the meeting were also introduced so that participants could make contact with them in the future and during the reception at the International Women's Tribune Centre which followed. The reception celebrated the completion of the Institute and provided a wider context for participants to meet more people interested in their work.

THIS REPORT

This report seeks to provide basic information about the Institute and to present it as a model for organizing internationally. Participant evaluations of the Institute indicate that it was a useful approach, although they felt that we tried to cover too much territory and occasionally sacrificed in depth what we gained in breadth and diversity. Overall they liked the three phases of the agenda and the utilization of themselves as resource people. While they enjoyed meeting so many outside resource people, they felt that there had been too many to fully appreciate them.

The following six chapters of this report summarize the major discussions of the Institute and the strategies devised in each area. They do not present a sequential or verbatim description of each separate panel or working group held on that theme, but organize the information from all the sessions in that area into an overall summary. The quotes from individuals are taken from the tapes in order to provide a flavor of the meeting and to acknowledge that these ideas came from particular people. However, no one is quoted in enough detail to represent adequately their full participation, and we hope that none of the quotes is taken out of context.

These chapters are uneven because many sessions were held in some areas, like human rights, while only a few were devoted to others like religion and culture, which had no final working group developing strategies. Nevertheless, we hope that they prove valuable to those who were not at the Institute but are interested in its proceedings. In particular, we recommend the strategies sections at the end of each chapter which do represent the collective wisdom of the groups on each theme and have been edited only slightly to provide more context and clarity to the ideas. While these were the strategies developed by the working groups and were accepted by the whole body in principle, no votes were taken and every participant may not agree with all the ideas expressed here.

The conclusion of this report discusses the organizing and networking decisions of the Institute and what has been done to date. We see these as guidelines for the work of other groups and for our second Women's Leadership Institute on Women, Violence, and Human Rights to be held in the second half of June, 1992.
“When we first began to conceptualize our rights we called our struggle ‘women’s rights’ or ‘feminism.’ We did not think in terms of ‘human rights’ because we were trying to understand what was distinct in women’s experience. Having conceptualized ‘women’s rights’ we now know what is missing in the mainstream definition of human rights. Our demand that ‘women’s rights are human rights’ is a return to the mainstream, but not to fit ourselves in on the old terms, but to transform the very definition of human rights.”

—Charlotte Bunch

A vision of “human rights” transformed was the underlying force that motivated the Institute as women worked to understand the complexity of existing international organizations and law while struggling to push beyond their limitations. Workshops and panel discussions explored a range of topics, from the agendas of the U.N. human rights bodies and NGOs like Amnesty International, to a feminist reconceptualization of “human rights.” Participants came away with a better sense of the work to be done and of new possibilities for collaboration and action.

A core question for feminists is whether the notion of “rights” and international law offer anything useful to women in their struggle for equality and dignity. Some argue that international human rights instruments are formal, distant documents unlikely to empower women or women’s communities in securing greater control over their lives. At the same time, as Bunch points out in her background paper for the Institute, “Women’s Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights,” the notion of human rights is one of the few moral visions ascribed to internationally and is one of the few concepts that speaks to the need for transnational activism and concern about the lives of people globally. The group generally agreed to the usefulness of a human rights framework, although there was much discussion about its limitations as presently conceived.
BY WAY OF BACKGROUND

In principle, international law accords significant weight to the notion of gender equality. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), for example, entitles all to “the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Since 1948, U.N. human rights bodies have adopted over 23 major conventions, including the Convention against Genocide (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1965), and two overarching treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. They have also drafted five treaties relating specifically to women, the most significant of which is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This far-reaching treaty calls for “equal rights for women, regardless of their marital status, in all fields political, economic, social, cultural and civil...”

In practice, though, women’s rights and women’s concerns have never been taken seriously by the “mainstream” human rights bodies. With but a few exceptions (e.g., traffic in women and genital mutilation), the Commission on Human Rights has almost totally ignored gender-related violations and governmental laws and practices that discriminate against women (although protecting the rights of women is part of the commission’s mandate). As Elsa Stamatopoulou, Director of the United Nations Centre on Human Rights, told participants, “By the time human rights debates reach the General Assembly, women’s issues from a human rights angle are practically absent. Such issues are discussed as ‘social’ items, implicitly of lesser political importance.”

Pressure from the specialized Commission on the Status of Women—created at the same time as the more powerful Commission on Human Rights—has encouraged some increased attention to women’s issues within the U.N. system. The Commission orchestrated the drafting of the women’s rights convention (CEDAW), a binding treaty that has been ratified by 110 state parties (not including some key actors like the United States and India). But as Stamatopoulou asks: Has the creation of special women’s rights treaties and mechanisms created symbolic recognition at the expense of action? Has the problem been acknowledged only to be marginalized?

The answer is largely yes. While there has been more “activity” around women’s issues recently, women’s rights have not been taken up at the highest levels of U.N. decision making. The Human Rights Committee, the leading U.N. body that investigates human rights violations, for example, has demonstrated an almost total lack of gender awareness in its discussions of the rights protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee issues general comments on each article describing what it considers the most important dimensions of each right. When discussing the right to “bodily integrity” and “right to life,” for example, the Committee did not even mention the physical violence that many women face daily in their lives. Another major treatise on torture and international law goes on for several hundred pages without mentioning the role that sexual violence plays in the intimidation and punishment of women.

While all international law suffers some for lack of enforcement, oversight of the women’s
rights convention is especially weak. States parties are required to submit status reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a monitoring body made up of 23 "experts" who are elected by States parties, but serve in a personal capacity. The Committee requests statistics on such things as women's participation in government, girl's access to education, and family law. But public censorship is the only enforcement tool available for encouraging state parties to come into compliance with the treaty's standards. Also, CEDAW does not have the authority to investigate individual or group claims of violation as does its "mainstream" cousin, the Human Rights Committee. And CEDAW is marginalized in every way: it receives less staff and money to complete its work, and is based in Vienna instead of Geneva where the "real" human rights bodies are based.

Other factors also limit the usefulness of CEDAW in addressing women's concerns. First, governments must ratify conventions before they become binding. Hina Jilani noted that women's groups must develop an international strategy to push for universal ratification. She noted, however, that even though Pakistan has not ratified CEDAW (or any other human rights treaty), she has successfully appealed to principles enshrined in CEDAW when arguing a sex discrimination case before Pakistan's supreme court. Other countries have ratified CEDAW but have entered "reservations," some of which go to the core of women's freedom and autonomy. In fact, States parties have made more reservations to CEDAW than to any other major treaty. Bangladesh, for example, has disallowed any provision that contradicts the teachings of Sharia law and the United Kingdom has reserved its right not to enforce certain provisions.

Further, NGOs have seldom used the machinery that is available—like the petitioning process under the Human Rights Committee—to press "mainstream" bodies to address violations of women's rights. Participants noted a great need for women's groups to better understand their options for pressuring influential bodies to take up women's rights. Likewise Jilani noted that "strong women can do a lot even with weak instruments." She called for greater pressure from women's groups on governments to elect dedicated, committed women as "experts" on CEDAW's oversight committee.

ORIGINS OF NEGLECT

During her panel presentation, Stamatopoulou helped participants understand some of the origins of international law's neglect of women's human rights. Some of the myopia no doubt stems from the overwhelmingly male composition of mainstream human rights bodies. But even other objections couched in human rights "theory," represent a fundamental reluctance to take women's lives seriously. As Stamatopoulou observed, "The United Nations does not need new legislative texts to improve the situation of women. The law is there and so are the mechanisms. What is missing is the political will."

Part of this reluctance stems from an underlying schism over the relative importance of civil and political rights vs. economic, social and cultural rights. Despite rhetoric about the indivisibility of human rights, traditional civil and political rights have received the lion's share of attention within mainstream human rights discourse. Human rights theorists from the West—particularly the United States—see "rights" as the duty of governments not to interfere with the civil and political liberties of
its citizens. By contrast, many Third World nations argue for the primacy of economic and social rights, guarantees that create a positive obligation on governments to meet basic human needs. Since many women’s issues evolve from their position as the majority of the world’s poor, the general neglect of economic and social rights means that women’s concerns are further neglected.

Perhaps more significant is the mainstream’s insistence on a division between public and private responsibility. Traditional human rights theory primarily focuses on violations perpetrated by the state against individuals, like torture, wrongful imprisonment, and arbitrary executions. Under this framework, mainstream theorists do not recognize wife assault and other forms of violence against women as human rights violations because such acts are perpetrated by private individuals, not the state. As Bunch observed, “violence against women is the touchstone that illustrates the mainstream’s limited concept of human rights.”

Participants at the Institute challenged this public/private split as a politically constructed barrier to keep women down. As Stamatopoulou noted, “the distinction between private and public responsibility has been used to justify inaction by the state and continued subordination of women.” And it is selectively applied. As Lori Heise observed, the human rights community has proven willing to stretch the boundaries of “state responsibility” to accommodate the concerns of men. “Mainstream human rights groups have taken on the phenomenon of “disappearances” in Argentina, murder of indigenous rubber tappers in Brazil, and racially-motivated hate crimes—all abuses perpetrated by private individuals,” she noted. “But when it comes to the beating and murder of millions of women each year, their hands are tied.”

Participants also noted the absurd distinctions that evolve when the public/private dichotomy is applied to the reality of women’s lives. Rape by a police officer, for example, becomes a violation, while rape by a stranger, husband, or acquaintance does not. As Ana Carcedo of Costa Rica remarked, “How can one say that the life of a political prisoner killed by the government is
worth more than the life of a women killed by her husband?” Some participants argued that the state could be held responsible for failing to protect the woman, especially in countries where there are discriminatory laws and prosecution practices. Even where the crime is one of omission rather than action, the consequences for the woman are the same.

FEMINIST RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The group spent considerable time both in large-group discussion and individual workshops discussing possibilities for a feminist “revisioning” of human rights. Some of the early discussion focused on how different forms of violence might be recast to fit readily-acknowledged types of abuse. Amnesty International and Refugee Women in Development, for example, have been arguing that rape is often a form of torture used to intimidate women into submission.

But panelists Rhonda Copelon and Celina Romany from the CUNY Law School Human Rights Project urged participants to go beyond extending existing human rights law, to criticizing the very structure of the debate. “Unless we re-conceptualize the foundation of human rights theory,” declared Romany, “we may end up arguing for the ‘inclusion of women’ in a framework that is inadequate for us.”

Participants described how mainstream definitions were inadequate for a feminist vision of human rights. Several Latin American participants noted that human rights language and practice accord women the right to exist only through their relation to others. “Our value derives from our role as mothers or wives,” said Magally Huggins, since “we exist to give birth, or for the pleasure of men.” Simone Diniz noted the irony of a worldview where women are the acknowledged bearers of humanity, but are not considered fully human themselves as in Brazil, where, “The fetus is more human than the vessel.”

The group concluded that the notion of “personhood” was key to reconceptualizing women’s rights. Women have a fundamental right to exist apart from any role or relationship they might have. Rights grounded in “personhood” also directly counter the notion of women as property. The group preferred appeals to “personhood” more than to “controlling one’s own body” because the term seemed more inclusive. While “controlling one’s body” includes reproductive rights and sexuality, it ignores women’s civil and political rights. Personhood connotes the full responsibilities and privileges of citizenship as well as personal control.

Roberta Clarke noted, however, that how we present the notion of personhood to our communities is very important. We should not appear to be against wives and mothers per se, but against how marriage and motherhood have been socially and politically constructed. It is no accident that the media and anti-feminist forces have exacerbated the distinction between feminists and mothers. As Bunch observed, we are in a “propaganda war” aimed at discrediting feminism in mainstream society.

BUILDING ALLIANCES

Participants agreed that an important step in getting women’s rights on the human rights agenda is to increase cooperation between women and human rights groups. Presently, there is hardly any cross-fertilization between the disciplines, and most feminists know very little about the intricacies of human rights law.
At the same time, some cautioned against the dangers of co-optation. There is a real risk of losing control over the agenda when small women’s organizations collaborate with more powerful human rights groups. Dorothy Thomas, Director of the Women’s Rights Project at Human Rights Watch, suggested that feminist and human rights groups seek joint funding for projects so that women retain control over their agenda. Agreeing with the danger of co-optation, Rana Nashashibi nonetheless spoke for many when she added that “we also must be careful that we don’t allow our fear of co-optation to leave us isolated.”

Sarada Balagopalan presented the Decade for Human Rights Education (1991-2001), an NGO initiative to advance a wholistic concept of human rights worldwide as an area for collaboration. Women’s groups can utilize the Decade as a time to promote an understanding of women’s rights as human rights with others involved in human rights education. A small group discussed using the decade as a vehicle for educating women locally about human rights, including helping them to see violence against them as a human rights concern. They concluded women must take leadership in defining and advancing the human rights agenda for the 21st Century.

There was also productive discussion of possibilities for collaboration between women’s groups and two veteran human rights groups, Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch. Both international groups have recently launched efforts to raise the visibility of human rights abuses against women. These were described by resource people present from the two groups.

Suzanne Roach of Amnesty explained that for the first time, AI has begun reporting on certain violations that women experience because they are women. She emphasized, however, that AI’s new focus extends only to violations that fall within Amnesty’s “strictly defined mandate,” which includes monitoring the rights and treatment of political prisoners, pressuring governments to release prisoners of conscience, and fighting capital punishment. Among Amnesty’s new areas of concern are rape as a form of torture within these situations, arrests and disappearances of women’s rights activists, sexual abuse of women refugees by police and soldiers, and the denial of pre-natal and postnatal care for women prisoners. The organization issued its first report on women, “Women in the Front Line,” and launched a campaign on women’s human rights as part of Amnesty’s 30th anniversary this year.

Dorothy Thomas explained that Human Rights Watch monitors compliance with all aspects of the Convention on Civil and Political Rights, not just those related to prisoners, making its mandate broader than Amnesty’s. Human Rights Watch also plays an advocacy role, pressuring the United States Government to make foreign aid decisions based on a realistic appraisal of a country’s human rights record. According to Thomas, the Women’s Project is breaking new ground by holding governments responsible for “complicity” in the action of private individuals—like violent husbands—who violate women’s human rights. The project will highlight instances in which the state plays a role “by legally sanctioning violations of women’s rights or by routinely tolerating abusive practices in which the risk factor is being female.”

In general, participants were enthusiastic about these initiatives, but they felt that human rights groups should take their lead from women in the affected countries in making such reports. Thomas explained that Human Rights Watch would only proceed if feminists in the host country
felt that an international collaboration would advance their own agenda. Each partner in such an effort brings to the project its own strengths: local groups have the hands-on experience and data necessary to make a convincing case, while groups like Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have expertise in arguing such cases and bringing them to the attention of the international media. If such efforts are to be persuasive, better documentation of cases and gender-specific data on arrests, prosecutions, sentencing and the like is needed.

Jilani suggested that international human rights groups should either be prepared to respond immediately when a violation has occurred or acknowledge in their reports that evidence may have been doctored in the months prior to their investigation. As it stands now, international reports sometimes undermine the validity of local accounts by making them appear sensationalist; in reality, international observers only get part of the story because they arrive months or years after the incidents occur.

Siriporn Skrobanek of Thailand expressed frustration over why her local Amnesty group would not take up the issue of trafficking in women. She now understands the limitations of Amnesty’s mandate, but she, like many participants, said this information is not well understood in their countries. Participants recommended that Amnesty and other human rights groups educate the public on their particular mandates and develop a “pass-off” policy of referring individuals to groups that are better positioned to help when they cannot take a case. They should not assume that women’s groups know what are their options within the human rights community.

Based on the panel and several workshops, the group developed the following recommendations for integrating women’s rights into the on-going human rights discourse:

**LOCAL/NATIONAL STRATEGIES:**

1. Develop educational materials and/or summaries of Institute discussions to share with your organization and other women’s groups and human rights NGOs.

2. Form local working groups or women’s human rights organizations to strategize and “re-conceptualize” the specific women’s human rights issues in a given setting.

3. Sponsor workshops for funders, human rights NGOs, and women’s organizations concerning violence against women and women’s human rights.

4. Introduce the concept of gender violence as a violation of human rights in working with victims as well as to police, social service agencies, etc.

5. Make contact with local women’s studies or other sympathetic departments at universities to encourage collaborative research projects around violence and other women’s rights issues.

6. Identify and cultivate positive relationships with women (and men) working within human rights organizations or join such groups to raise these concerns.

7. Develop collaborative projects with and bring cases to human rights organizations that utilize human rights concepts and laws on behalf of women. Request that human rights organizations pass on issues that do not fall within their mandate.
8. Identify upcoming conferences and programs related to human rights (such as Dec. 10th activities) or women's issues and arrange to have violence against women and other women's rights issues addressed.

9. Take advantage of forums on many topics, such as reproductive rights or traffic in children, to raise issues of women's human rights even if they are not already seen that way.

**GLOBAL STRATEGIES:**

1. Write a manifesto or statement declaring that women's rights are human rights to be used as an organizing tool by activists around the world.

2. Develop an advocacy manual for women's groups on options for getting the world community to recognize violence against women as a human right's issue.

3. Create a Women's Task Force for the NGO Decade of Human Rights Education.

4. Develop coordinated strategies for ensuring that violence against women and other women's rights issues are addressed at important events including:

   • 1993 U.N. World Conference on Human Rights
   • 1993 U.S./Soviet Conference on Human Rights
   • 1993 International Women's Health Conference (Uganda)
   • 1993 International Interdisciplinary World Congress on Women (Costa Rica)
   • 1994 UN World Conference on Population
   • 1995 UN World Conference on Women (China).


2. The Sub-Commission of the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities has addressed trafficking in women and forced prostitution through its Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. The Sub-Commission has also assigned a Special Rapporteur to study “traditional practices affecting the health of women and children,” particularly female circumcision.

3. See General Comment 7(16), UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev. 1, p.6, 1989; and General Comment 9(16), UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev. 1, p.4, 1989.


5. For an example of this approach, see their report, “Criminal Injustice: Violence Against Women in Brazil,” released jointly with Americas Watch in October, 1991.
OVER the course of the Institute, the group explored the impact of violence against women in development and looked at various ways in which violence shapes and impedes women's struggles to define and create better lives for ourselves and our communities. The group considered how to get the mainstream development community to recognize the significance of gender violence to the development process and how to broaden traditional notions of "development" beyond economic growth, bringing a perspective on women's rights as part of an alternative approach to development. Specific efforts were also made to articulate the links between development policy and sex tourism; between militarism and prostitution; and between refugee vulnerability and sexual assault.

GENDER VIOLENCE: A DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

Roxanna Carrillo's paper, "Violence Against Women: An Obstacle to Development," prepared for the Institute as part of a collaborative research project with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) provided the point of departure for examining the links between violence against women and development. Some of its statistics were startling:

- Domestic battery is the greatest single cause of injury to women in the United States.
- Over two-thirds of Korean women are beaten regularly by their husbands.
- One in four Canadian women can expect to be sexually assaulted at some point in their lives.
- In Papua New Guinea, 61 percent of people killed in 1981 were women, the majority by their spouses.
The list goes on, with similar statistics documented for countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Colombia, Kenya, Kuwait and Uganda. In addition to causing untold human misery, violence is often a direct obstacle to women's participation in development projects. For example, a revolving loan project of the Working Women’s Forum in Madras almost collapsed when its most energetic participants dropped out after being beaten by their husbands (the men saw the women’s growing empowerment as a threat to their control).

Likewise, the fear and isolation imposed by domestic violence, denies countries the full talents of their female citizens. As Lori Heise observes, “Women cannot lend their labor or creative ideas fully when they are burdened with the physical and psychological scars of violence.” The mental and physical health impact of violence includes the greater likelihood that battered women will need psychiatric treatment or commit suicide along with an increased demand for emergency care in hospitals and clinics. Then there is the terrible toll of AIDS, a risk that women can be forced to assume through rape. Even in consensual sex, women may be afraid to raise the issue of condoms for fear they will be beaten. For example, in Uganda there are four times as many more cases of AIDS among girls age 15 to 19 than among boys, as older men seek younger partners to lessen their risk of infection.5

Carrillo’s paper concludes, “Overall development agencies and organizations addressing women in development must conduct their program and project work with an increased sensitivity to the issue of violence, and the ways in which development itself brings forth new forms of gendered violence.”

Based on Carrillo’s assessment, Roberta Clarke from Trinidad and Tobago, drew a link between economic dislocation and domestic violence. She referred to a study from Guyana that showed violence was more prevalent among lower socio-economic groups—the unemployed and those working in the informal sector. While it is important to remember that violence crosses class lines, it does appear that poverty can exacerbate violence and limit a woman’s resources to counter or escape from it.

“Development” itself is often violent to women as Rosa Briceño noted. The changes waged in the name of economic progress have generally worsened the position of women and children in third world countries. Workshop members spoke specifically about the impact of structural adjustment on the availability of food, clothing and medical care in their countries. In Zambia, for example, price subsidies for food staples have been removed at the insistence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). “Not uncommonly,” notes Felicia Sakala, “mothers have to wait in line five hours for basic goods. Hospitals no longer have medicines, so parents are directed to buy medicines at the chemist, but usually they don’t have the money.”

CONVINCING THOSE IN POWER

A key strategy discussed was how to get mainstream development organizations to understand why violence against women is a development issue. Without such links, development resources will remain out of reach of women’s groups doing work on violence, and development workers will remain ignorant of how gender violence affects their projects.

Annette Pypops, who has had first hand experience with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), recommended that groups frame their arguments in the language of the development mainstream. “We
have found,” she noted “that appeals to ‘human rights’ or a women’s right to ‘control her own body’ have not been persuasive.” Far more powerful have been arguments that frame violence as an impediment to women’s work potential and their participation in development projects.

Echoing this view, Simone Diniz of Brazil noted how she often uses traditional development arguments when lobbying for greater support for women-focused projects. “I point out that improving women’s literacy has been shown to yield all sorts of secondary benefits such as improved child survival. Or that women recycle more of their income back into the family whereas men spend it on alcohol and cigarettes.” While Brazilian feminists may conceive of the issue in terms of a woman’s right to education and income, they must refer to child survival as well, in order to capture the attention of development funders.

There are, however, potential hazards in this approach. Susana Fried expressed concern that aligning our justifications too closely to the logic of the development mainstream can be dangerous. “When we frame violence as an economic issue, for example, we use categories that are defined for us. When we talk about violence as a development issue or an economic issue we also must challenge the way “development” and “economy” are defined. Otherwise we risk restricting our argument rather than expanding their understanding.” Perhaps one answer, she suggested, is expanding the number of feminist funders like MATCH.

And yet, feminist funders too rely on strategic approaches for their own funding. As Pypops pointed out, MATCH would not have CIDA money to distribute if they had not been able to convince CIDA of the relevance of violence to the agency’s primary concerns.

This question of tactics raised the deeper issue of how to expand the conventional understanding of “development.” Many people have spoken to the need of broadening “development” beyond simply economic growth. But the real challenge, as Lourdes Bueno of the Dominican Republic observed, is to get the mainstream to accept arguments based on “rights” rather than on economic expediency. “We need to integrate a human rights perspective into mainstream development theory and practice,” she noted.

Yet the task of bringing about such broad-reaching change remains formidable. The most direct route, participants concluded, would be to influence mainstream organizations from a more feminist perspective. This requires networking among groups about jobs that feminists could fill. Alternatively, feminists can seek out and support progressives who are already working inside such organizations. Crucial to this approach, however, is a change in feminist culture which now tends to see working in the mainstream as a “sell-out.”

The movement needs both grassroots activists outside and women in positions of power inside who can help institutionalize our gains. Individuals who choose to work from positions of power must remain accountable to their constituencies, and both those inside and outside of such structures must work together to develop better mechanisms for maintaining communication and strengthening each other’s work.

**RECONCEPTUALIZING DEVELOPMENT**

Discussing how to get gender violence on the development agenda naturally raised questions about the nature of “development” itself. All participants agreed that the traditional notion of “development,” defined solely in socio-economic
terms, is inadequate and misleading when used as a measure of human progress. The persistence of violence against women in industrialized countries is a potent reminder that not only does economic growth not solve all problems, but brings with it new forms of violence.

Nilda Rimonte articulated this concern when she called for a new definition of “progress” in the international arena. The group discussed the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) Human Development Report, first issued in 1990 as an example of moving in this direction. The report defines “development” as a process of enlarging people’s choices: “The most critical of these wide-ranging choices are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and personal self-respect.”

Participants liked the emphasis on choice, but were wary of any definition that did not explicitly guarantee such choices for women as well as men. It is useful to note that the 1991 report was more explicit about the issue of gender—in response to such a critique from women both outside and within the UN. The UNDP Report proposes that the Human Development Index (a composite indicator designed to replace GNP as the measure of “development”) take gender disparities into account. The 1990 index combined national income with two social indicators—life expectancy and adult literacy. The refined 1991 index is based on improved measures of income and knowledge, and adds new measures for gender disparity, income distribution, and human freedom. The report notes: “If gender disparity is considered—and it must be if human development is the development of all—Japan’s number 1 HDI ranking among the 30 countries, for example, drops to number 17, more than halfway down, and Finland moves up, from number 12 to number one.”

There was also consideration of efforts to include women’s unpaid productive and reproductive work in the United Nations System of National Accounts (UNSNA). This economic accounting system, designed in 1940, forms the basis of the GNP and GDP measures that drive mainstream definitions of “development” and “progress.” In her book *If Women Counted,*
Marilyn Waring describes the UNSNA as the “major tool of male economics,” and criticizes it for affording no value to the environment, women’s labor, the informal sector, or leisure. She estimates that if properly evaluated, unpaid household work by women would add a third to global production.5

Participants endorsed the idea of requiring all proposed development projects to undergo a “gender analysis” to anticipate their impact on women before being funded. Perhaps in this way, we can avoid another generation of projects that worsen women’s overall position in society. Ana Carcedo noted that some Dutch agencies already require such a review and MATCH International has held workshops for development NGOs on how to conduct a gender analysis when planning overseas projects. The U.S. Agency for International Development is required by statute (Section 113 of the Foreign Assistance Act, commonly known as the Percy Amendment) to perform such analyses, but implementation of the requirement is still uneven.

**DEVELOPMENT POLICY, MILITARISM AND THE SEX INDUSTRY**

A major subtheme explored under the rubric of “violence and development” was prostitution and the exploitation of women’s economic and sexual vulnerability through sex tourism, trafficking in women, trade in domestic workers, and “mail-order” brides. All of these phenomena have as their root the exploitation of women’s domestic and sexual labor for profit. The profiteers are individual men, entrepreneurs, and governments in both the North and the South.

Nowhere is this exploitation more evident than in the rapidly industrializing countries of South East Asia. In Thailand, for example, Siriporn Skrobanek told participants that the sex industry first took hold in her country during the Vietnam War when the presence of the U.S. military base created a high demand for sexual services. In 1967, a treaty between the U.S. and the Thai government created even more demand by designating Thailand as a “Rest and Recreation” destination for soldiers stationed in Vietnam. When the United States withdrew from Indochina in 1976, Thailand embarked on an explicit policy of promoting business tourism as a way to sustain the enormous service industry (hotels, bars, massage parlors), that had sprung up during the war.

The government turned a blind eye as hotels, bars, and tour agencies actively promoted prostitution and sex games to attract foreign tourists. Tour operators in many countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Japan openly advertised fantasy vacations with “erotic pleasures” included in the price. Thai women also became one of the country’s main exports beginning in this era. Lured by promises of good salaries at respectable jobs, many Thai women accompany middle-men to Europe only to be sold into prostitution, or forced to work for slave wages as domestic servants. Other middle-men recruit women already working as sex workers to staff the burgeoning “entertainment” industry in Japan, Europe and Australia. Still others sell Thai and other South East Asian women as “mail-order” brides to men all over the world. For as little as $5,000, industrial world suitors can purchase so-called “sexy, docile” Asian wives. The women, of course, receive none of the proceeds and often end up stranded and abused in a foreign land.

Heisoo Shin echoed this theme when describing the recent growth of the “entertainment” industry in Korea, which has expanded along with South Korea’s spectacular...
economic rise during the 1980s. Sexually explicit games and erotic parties have become an integral part of the business culture in her country. Government officials woo foreign clients and corporate executives vie for contracts by entertaining their colleagues at lavish private parties. Once again, women’s sexual services are being extracted to boost economic growth.

Skrobanek recounted the active resistance that South East Asian women’s groups and European feminists have waged in the face of such abuse. As early as 1981, women began organizing protests in the North and the South against sex tourism and a few cases have been brought in European courts against traffickers. Activists in the Philippines and elsewhere have worked to expose the link between military expansion and the growth of prostitution, and the collusion between industrial and third world governments in the exploitation of Asian women.

One workshop explored further links between prostitution, AIDS, development, and militarism. Niamh Reilly, for example, spoke of the collaboration between the U.S. military and Philippine pimps with regard to AIDS. According to an article in The Nation, the U.S. government alerts servicemen to prostitutes who are HIV-positive by publishing their pictures on a flier, but does not inform the women themselves. As servicemen stop frequenting these women, they are fired and often return to their villages where they unwittingly infect others. Ironically, most these women contracted HIV in the first place through U.S. GIs.

Internal divisions within the women’s movement over whether prostitution can be considered a valid career option for women were also discussed. Some European and U.S. prostitute’s rights groups have argued that, when freely chosen, prostitution is a legitimate and empowering way for women to use their sexuality to exact money from men. Another perspective, articulated by Ebon Kram is, “what is free choice in a patriarchal world?” The constraints on “choice” may be particularly apparent in situations where women choose prostitution because structural inequities and rampant poverty leave them few other choices.

The difficulty around this issue lies in trying to reconcile two competing feminist values: a strong stance against economic and sexual exploitation and a firm belief in women’s right to choice and to define her own reality. A key consideration must be the degree of power that a woman can exert over her pay, her working conditions, and her physical safety. Most women in prostitution have very little of that control, but likewise many women in other areas also experience minimal control over such matters. The focus of the group was not therefore on sweeping judgements about prostitution and all women, but rather on specific strategies to end conditions where prostitution is clearly coerced by both social and economic forces and to address the violence against women in these circumstances. Our approaches must consistently seek to expand women’s abilities to resist all forms of sexual and economic exploitation.

**THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEE WOMEN**

Another issue explored under the topic of violence and development was the plight of the millions of refugee women and children. According to Sima Wali, director of the advocacy group Refugee Women in Development, violence against refugee women is increasing along with other violations of their human rights. Not uncommonly, women are raped during their flight as a form of torture—often multiple times by various men. Others
who arrive unaccompanied at border areas are being sold into prostitution, often without their knowledge of where they are being taken.

Wali told participants that through her work with re-settled refugees in the United States she has begun to detect a link between rape during flight and subsequent domestic violence. Men who were unable to protect "their women" from violation often feel inadequate and powerless, which they compensate by exerting violent control over their wives.

The invisibility of women to international aid and development agencies is another serious problem. Although women and children comprise at least 80 percent of all refugees, development organizations rarely direct policies, training or support specifically to them. This gap in programs and services is all the more crucial given that, as Wali noted, "We are living in an age of permanent refugees." This underscores the urgency of increased recognition by the international community of the implications for women's lives of these massive migrations and the necessity of appropriate responses.

**STRATEGIES:**

Based on the panel presentations and workshops on violence as a development issue, the participants developed the following recommendations:

1. Compile and publicize cases where gender violence has had an impact on development projects. These cases should be shared widely to demonstrate how violence affects the development community's on-going work.

2. Educate researchers about violence and development to encourage further scholarship in this area. Activists need to make their data and conceptual needs known to sympathetic women in the research community.

3. Gain access to major international development organizations and funders by working to get feminist women hired as staff, and network among groups about possible openings.

4. Identify and cultivate relationships with women and men inside mainstream NGOs, development agencies and foundations who may be sympathetic to this issue. Support them in their efforts at reform from within, and help keep them informed about and connected to the grassroots by involving them in workshops, forums, etc.

5. Continue to develop the linkages between violence and development at a theoretical and implementation level. Present this information in a compelling way to those in positions of power within funding and development agencies. Document the outcome so that others might benefit from insights gained about how to influence mainstream institutions.

6. Increase funding available for projects and develop a targeted campaign to saturate certain key organizations with proposals related to gender violence. This would be a consciousness raising campaign to demonstrate the overwhelming need for international support for such projects (i.e. groups would not necessarily expect funding from these organizations first time around).

7. Build political coalitions with groups working on women's economic empowerment, alternative economic agendas, women's human rights, etc.

8. Identify and use available forums to raise violence against women as a development issue including conferences, newsletters, university programs, professional association meetings, etc.

9. Hold a worldwide action on November 25 (International Day Against Violence Against Women), December 6 (Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre), and December 10
(International Human Rights Day) where all the symbols of women's oppression could be burned in a "freedom trash can," including IMF structural adjustment plans, marriage licenses, religious ordinances, etc.

Additionally, the working group on prostitution and sex tourism developed the following list of strategies specific to their theme:

1. Build an international consensus against trafficking in women and children by educating the public and policymakers about it. Build upon people's outrage at the exploitation of children to help them see that this is awful for women also.

2. Demand that existing laws and treaties be better enforced. Amend those laws that need to be strengthened.

3. Shift the focus of laws from prostitutes to their male clients and pimps. Decriminalize women's prostitution so that they may organize. Keep all pimping and trafficking illegal.

4. Work with existing groups that work with prostitutes to improve their political understanding of the sex industry and to develop realistic alternatives to participation in it.

5. Publicize the names of male clients, corporations, and travel agencies involved in sex tourism. Cooperate with feminists in their countries of origin to expose participants in this exploitation of Asian women.

6. Exploit natural competition between political parties by trying to get one to take up the issue of trafficking and forced prostitution.

7. Use international policing organizations like "Interpol" to fight sex tourism, pedophiles, etc.

8. Build community awareness of the exploitation of pornography by writing slogans like "This promotes Violence Against Women" across offensive advertisements and billboards.


7. See conclusion of this report for information on the 16 Days of Activism campaign which incorporates this idea.
VIOLENCE AND HEALTH

AND SEXUALITY

VIOLENCE AND HEALTH

Within the broad field of violence and health, discussions and panel presentations revolved around three themes: 1) violence in the health care system; 2) the health implications of gender violence; and 3) the denial of women’s reproductive and sexual freedom as a form of violence.

An often ignored aspect of the violence health equation is the violence present within the health care system itself. As Simone Diniz, a medical doctor from Brazil observed, “Health institutions are strong, powerful agents of control over women’s lives.” As such they can be extremely violent to women through their treatment of pregnancy, abortion, child birth, and sickness.

Diniz identified a whole range of ways that violence is evident in the medical system including forced sterilization, gynecological rape, compulsory motherhood, and the “medicalization” of pregnancy and birth. In Sao Paulo, for example, 98.5 percent of women give birth in hospitals, but especially poor women frequently have to go from hospital to hospital during labor in search of a free bed. Diniz referred to one maternal mortality survey in Sao Paulo which documented a case of a woman in labor going to 11 hospitals before she was admitted. Once admitted to a hospital, a woman has a 50 percent chance of undergoing a caesarian section and 15 to 40 percent chance of contracting a hospital infection. Often she is allowed no contact with the baby or with anyone she knows for many hours.

Diniz argues that such treatment is institutional violence. She is currently developing a new epidemiology of violent death that will take into account any avoidable death of a healthy individual and in particular the death of women from
avoidable complications of pregnancy, childbirth and battery. The component of maternal mortality that results from gross deficiencies in governmental expenditure on obstetric and gynecological services, or the lack of access to safe and legal abortion would be counted as "violent death." By changing the definition and measuring "years of healthy life lost" (a standard epidemiologic measure of pre-mature death), Diniz hopes to demonstrate the incredible toll such violence takes on women’s lives.

Several panelists elaborated on the health consequences of gender violence. Lori Heise outlined issues of violence and health in the United States, where battering is the greatest single cause of injury to women, more than car accidents, muggings and rapes combined. According to former Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, 3 to 4 million women are beaten by their partners each year and 20 to 25 percent of women who go to hospital emergency rooms are there for symptoms related to on-going abuse. Battery is also the primary context for many other problems: it is associated with 35 percent of all rapes, 45 percent of cases of female alcoholism and 26 percent of female suicides. Violence against women affects children also. Recent research shows that children witnessing family violence exhibit psychological and behavior problems similar to abused children.

Elsewhere, the situation is no less acute. According to the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Law Reform Committee, 17 percent of wives in urban PNG needed hospital treatment for injuries related to battering. In Bangladesh, assassination of wives by husbands accounts for 50 percent of all murders, and in Peru one third of women who go to hospital emergency rooms are victims of abuse.

The African participants discussed examples of gender violence on their continent. As everywhere else, rape and battery are common, but in addition, up to 80 million African women have been subjected to genital mutilation, euphemistically called "female circumcision," which is a procedure with severe health consequences for women both at the time of the operation and later, in particular, during sexual activity and childbirth. Often clitoridectomies are performed without anesthesia and with dirty cutting instruments leading to infection, tetanus and sometimes death. Following mutilation, women can experience chronic bladder infections, pelvic infections, obstructed labor and severe tearing and bleeding during childbirth—especially infibulated women.

Pat Mahmoud from Nigeria also spoke of Vesio-Vascular Fistulae (VVF), a terrible condition that afflicts many "child brides" in Northern Nigeria. These young girls are forced to have intercourse, become pregnant, and deliver babies before their bodies are mature. This causes tearing and destruction of the urinary tract system so that the girls constantly drip urine and ultimately become social outcasts.

Participants shared strategies that could prompt appropriate and effective responses on the part of the health care system to victims of gender violence. Jackie Campbell, a nursing professor from Wayne State University, told the group about the U.S. "Nursing Network Against Domestic Violence." The Network is a consortium of activist nurses who are conducting research and training health care personnel to recognize and respond to victims of violence. It also details referral procedures and counseling for women identified as abused. Some progressive hospitals in the United States have developed a protocol used by professionals to identify abuse and raise the subject with female patients. According to Diniz, a similar effort is underway in Brazil. Her group is now training
health professionals in Sao Paulo to recognize and respond to abuse. Both Campbell and Diniz are working to ensure that doctors record “wife assault” as the cause of a woman’s injury rather than conceal the gender violence with technical medical language.

The third and final link participants explored was that between violence and women’s reproductive and sexual freedom. They cited the unnecessary carnage of women resulting from the criminalization of abortions as a brutal form of torture, and women’s lack of access to safe and reliable forms of contraception as a form of “forced labor” and “inhuman and degrading treatment.” The working group coined the phrase “Forced Motherhood is Forced Labor” to protest women’s lack of control over their own reproductive life. As Lata P.M. observed, “Women in India are treated solely as reproductive machines. What’s more,” she noted “they are rewarded more when they produce boys.”

Diniz spoke for many when she said that “denying a woman’s right to decide whether or not to have a child is denying her status as a human being. Humanizing ourselves is gaining the right to decide about our own bodies.” The reason why reproductive rights are not considered “human rights,” she observed pointedly, “is because men don’t reproduce.”

The group discussed how pregnant women are afforded no independent personhood. Niamh Reilly agreed, noting that the medical profession has even started to refer to the “maternal environment” instead of to the mother. “As soon as the fetus is acknowledged as a person,” she observed, “the woman is dismissed. Since it is impossible to have two people in the same body, the woman becomes a non-person.” A story recounted by Campbell made a similar point: Several years ago in Detroit a pregnant woman was pushed out of a window by her boyfriend and died, but the baby survived. The District Attorney did not prosecute for the woman’s death, but three months later when the baby died, Detroit was outraged and the boyfriend was prosecuted and convicted for killing the baby. No one seemed to care about the woman.

The working group concluded: “To reclaim women’s personhood and their human rights we must begin with demanding women’s absolute control over their reproduction, sexuality and ethical decision making.” Reclaiming women’s personhood must involve reconceptualizing public and private spheres. Currently women are expected to take full responsibility in the private sphere for housework, and sexual and affective services, but are rarely guaranteed the legal rights and protections granted to citizens in the “public sphere.” Decisions which ought to be private, such as whether or not to bear a child, are pushed into the public domain. At the same time, access to women’s bodies is taken for granted and reflected in high rates of sexual assault and harassment and violent pornography.

WOMEN AND AIDS

After the panel on Health and Sexuality, Leslie Wolfe of the Center for Women Policy Studies (CWPS) presented “Fighting for Our Lives: Women Confronting AIDS,” a public education video which her organization produced in response to the growing Women and AIDS crisis in the United States. CWPS undertook the project in 1987 to address the fact that women were either invisible in discussions of AIDS or treated as “transmitters” infecting “innocent victims”, that is, men and children. The video focuses on the positive community work women are undertaking to organize
educational, preventative, and support programs that combat the physiological and socially-constructed effects of AIDS. The video concentrates on the efforts of several women of color since it is their communities that are now bearing the brunt of the epidemic. Charlotte Bunch emphasized that the connection between race and AIDS is really the connection between racism and AIDS. People of color are more vulnerable to the devastation of AIDS because of racism in the health care system, and the disproportionate poverty, malnutrition, and inadequate education and social services in their communities.

Wolfe commented on three major areas which need immediate attention. Firstly, groups collecting data on AIDS cases such as the US Center for Disease Control, generally don't include opportunistic diseases, such as gynecological infections, associated with women who have AIDS. Consequently, many cases of women with AIDS go undetected until the disease has reached an advanced stage. Secondly, there is a dire shortage of medical research on the impact of AIDS on women since the study of the disease has been carried out entirely with reference to the male body. Thirdly, frequently a government will do nothing about AIDS until it has ravaged a community; there must be an immediate emphasis on prevention if such catastrophes are to be averted.

Hina Jilani spoke about the position of women with AIDS in Pakistan recounting one story of a young woman who had been imprisoned for having AIDS. Jilani filed a habeas corpus on her behalf; when she was released she was sent into isolation and denied food and medical treatment in her rural community and died shortly afterwards. Diniz told participants how serious the situation is for women in Brazil. In the United States, the first group to become vocal about AIDS casualties was the white gay community. Very soon however, it became clear that the poor people of color and particularly women, were being affected most extensively. In Brazil, 75 percent of the women who have died of AIDS were heterosexual monogamous women who believed that they were "socially" protected. In general, Diniz reported, women enter the AIDS statistics as a mortality figure.

The relation between violence against women and AIDS takes many forms. We need to be careful that in emphasizing women's role as care-givers and as leaders in safe sexual practices, men are not "let off the hook," and that the violence women confront daily is not underestimated. Beth Richie, from the Community Health Education Program at Hunter College, New York, pointed out that women are raped or frequently lack control over the terms of their sexual activity with men. Therefore any campaign to halt the spread of AIDS which depends upon such control is not taking into account the realities of women's lives. Wolfe in turn reported cases of married upper-class women being beaten by their husbands for asking them to use condoms.

Richie referred to the double bind women are in whereby they are expected to take responsibility for safe sex and at the same time are punished for being sexually active. Among United States prison populations, for example, men are routinely given condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS. Women prisoners on the other hand are often penalized for being sexually active with other women and are not given condoms even though they are frequently raped or have sex with male prison guards.
CRIMINALIZING WOMEN’S SEXUALITY

Richie introduced a series of themes on violence, women and criminality during her panel presentation. She recounted some findings of her current research into the role that violence plays in women’s criminal activity. She is interviewing women who are new arrivals at the women’s detention center of Riker’s Island, a United States facility for those accused, but not yet convicted, of crimes. Roughly 85 percent of the detainees are poor, African-American or Latina women. Richie has found that in almost all cases, physical or sexual violence has played a major role in the women’s “criminal” behavior. Marta is a case in point. Marta was arrested after being found bleeding in an alley from a stab wound in her stomach. She was cut open by enemies of her boyfriend who were attempting to retrieve the 20 condoms full of cocaine that her boyfriend had forced her to swallow. Marta is currently at Riker’s Island charged with felony possession of a narcotic while her boyfriend is free. As Richie observed, “these are women who have been defined as criminal by the system instead of as victims of crime.”

Jilani brought up a parallel situation where she defended several Bangladeshi women who had been abducted from Bangladesh and then forced into prostitution in Pakistan. When the police raided the brothels, the women were arrested and treated as criminals instead of being recognized as victims. Both Jilani and Gina Cedamanos noted direct parallels with women accused of drug smuggling in jail in both Pakistan and Peru. Often such women have been “hooked” on drugs by men to get them to serve as carriers.

Richie presented a chart (see figure below) for conceptualizing the criminalization of women’s behavior. The process begins with an ideology of womanhood that defines women as physically, emotionally, and psychologically “inadequate.” Women are then stigmatized for their inadequacies and meet with public intolerance in ways which are most pronounced with regard to motherhood and sexuality. The stigma is frequently pathologized so that institutions seize control, women become vulnerable to intervention, and behaviors that used to be defined as just “inadequate” or “pathological,” are defined as “criminal.”

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pregnant, she is viewed as a vessel containing a baby who is "public property." The stigma is frequently pathologized so that institutions begin to take control and pregnancy becomes defined as a "medical problem" instead of a health opportunity. Once institutions seize control, women become vulnerable to intervention: abortions become restricted or illegal; women addicted to crack get charged with "fetal child abuse"; and lesbian mothers are vulnerable to losing their children in child custody conflicts. Increasingly, Richie asserts, behaviors that used to be defined as just "inadequate" or "pathological" are now being defined as "criminal" with concomitant penalties.

Syarifah Sabaroedin of Kalyanamitra Foundation in Indonesia described the impact of criminalizing women's sexuality on lesbians in her region. Because of isolation and a lack of societal support for lesbian relationships, lesbians frequently repeat heterosexual patterns of partner abuse, and are vulnerable to battery from fathers and brothers, as well as suicide. This hostile social context is exacerbated by the marginalization of lesbians in the mainstream Indonesian women's movement which has no open discussion of, or commitment to, addressing lesbian oppression. Most see lesbianism as a "sin", a "disorder", or at best, a "personal choice." Such a climate, asserted Sabaroedin, is not conducive to challenging prevailing heterosexist ideology. Dealing with lesbianism is mistakenly deferred when in reality it is at the frontier of challenging the subordination of all women.

One workshop discussed in depth how society—and the law in particular—treats women's sexuality. Participants noted specific practices with respect to rape and the law. Magally Huggins from Venezuela observed that in her country the law treats rape as a crime against public morality and not a crime against the woman herself. There is a reduced sentence for rape if the perpetrator can prove the woman has ever worked as a prostitute. In Peru, according to Cedamanos, if a rapist agrees to marry his victim and she accepts, then no crime has been committed—the real violation being against the family honor which presumably is rectified through marriage. Family pressure is often so acute that women feel forced into accepting this "solution."

In Pakistan, women deemed sexually active are considered immoral and undeserving of legal protection from rape. Medical examiners are instructed to apply a "finger test" to alleged rape victims which involves counting the fingers which the victim's vagina will accommodate to assess whether she has sex regularly. Jilani noted that before Pakistan's recent wave of Islamic law reform, male adulterers had to pay compensation to the woman's husband. Now, any type of "sex" outside of marriage including rape, and adultery, is considered a crime against the state. She pointed out that it is a fundamental principle in most constitutions that people cannot be made to incriminate themselves. But in Pakistan, women's bodies can betray them: if a woman becomes pregnant, the pregnancy itself serves as proof that illicit intercourse has taken place, and she can be prosecuted for it even when she was raped.

COUNSELING SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

A final area of inquiry was counseling victims of violence. Karla Jackson-Brewer, an African-American therapist with many years of experience working with survivors of violence, led a workshop on feminist therapy. Feminist therapy attempts to integrate the public and
private realm by taking into account the harmful effects of society's sexism, racism and homophobia. It avoids victim-blaming and views clients as survivors. Based on an empowerment model, women are encouraged to identify their own dissatisfactions, set personal goals, and make informed choices and changes. This contrasts with the traditional medical model that seeks to diagnose and cure dysfunction.

One working group identified three models of assisting survivors of violence: 1) support groups which are run by experienced facilitators; 2) self-help groups, where members attend to each others needs; and 3) crisis intervention therapy, conducted in groups or individually. The advantage of self-help groups is that all members are equal and there is no power differential between therapist and client. They also help women feel less isolated and reinforce the notion that women themselves can make positive changes in their lives. In Costa Rica, for example, Cefemina runs support groups for battered women, and according to Ana Carcedo, longer-term members serve as examples to newcomers of the magnitude of change that is possible.

The group's clear preference was to rely on non-professional services as much as possible. Certainly, some women need clinical counseling or medication and they should be referred, but participants—especially those from the United States—felt uncomfortable with the recent “professionalization” of battered women's counseling and advocacy. Increasingly, self-help groups and peer counseling are being replaced with professional therapy, shifting emphasis from empowering survivors to “treating” victims. Feminist therapy is an important alternative to traditional medical models of treatment, but even feminist therapy should not replace self-help and other peer based approaches.

Participants also noted the importance of compassion and support for those who work with survivors of gender violence. Shelter workers, support-group leaders, and counselors need a place to vent their frustrations, to talk, and to revitalize themselves. Learning how to set limits and boundaries was noted as an essential form of self-defense for those working in this field.

**STRATEGIES**

The group generated the following recommendations around the themes of violence, health and sexuality:

1. Expose the violence inherent in many health care systems including non-consensual and inhuman procedures inflicted on women (abortion without anesthesia, hysterectomy abuse, sexual abuse of psychiatric patients), homophobic attitudes in treatment, and the consequences of withholding or passing on incorrect information to women about their health. Sympathetic nurses or technicians could document and report abuses that they witness. Women’s groups could have programs to accompany women during gynecological visits or childbirth, similar to the advocates that accompany women to court.

2. Where health facilities are publicly owned, document systematic neglect or abuse of women by the health care system as the basis for action through human rights NGOs.

3. Collaborate with Women's Studies programs and other related disciplines at universities to promote research on the health consequences of violence.

4. Advocate for development of alternative, woman-centered health care facilities that promote a healthy vision of women’s bodies.
5. Seek out opportunities to integrate data collection on violence against women into ongoing health initiatives (e.g., contact local family planning organizations to see if they would give out literature on battering and/or collect data from clients on abuse; see if your national AIDS program is conducting any sexual surveys where questions on violence could be asked).

6. Train doctors, family planning workers, nurses, etc. to recognize symptoms of abuse. Clinics should be encouraged to adopt a standard protocol that details how to counsel battered women—heterosexual or lesbian—and who they can be referred to for counseling or legal action.

7. Persuade the World Health Organization to recognize violence against women as a health issue and to recognize self-determination in reproductive decision making as a basic human right.

8. Work both at the national and international level to get violence integrated into on-going health initiatives such as the Safe Motherhood Initiative.

9. Coordinate with anti-violence and health groups an international campaign focused on International Health Day (April 7 for Africa and May 28 for Latin America) around violence against women as a health and human rights issue. Posters and banners could read: Violence against Women is a Health Issue and a Violation of Human Rights. The campaign would use a common logo or symbol, and slogans would be translated into local languages.

10. Prepare posters with slogans such as “My Body, My Choice,” “Midwives Back by Popular Demand,” “Forced Motherhood is Forced Labor,” and “Women for Voluntary, Pleasurable, Human and Socially Supported Motherhood.” The campaign could use existing international women’s health and reproductive rights networks to help coordinate this project.

1. See Appendix C for figures cited in this chapter as well as other useful statistics on gender violence internationally.
Religion and culture have been used, more than any other reasons, to defend practices oppressive to women around the world. At the same time, they provide core values that are important to many individuals and that are often unique to the identity of societies. Throughout the Institute, participants struggled with the question of how to challenge the destructive aspects of religion and culture while affirming the positive ones.

A recurring theme emerged in the discussions on religion and culture, best expressed by Hina Jilani when she said “There is no value in oppression and no value in protecting the parts of culture and religion that are oppressive to women.” The group sought to pinpoint for change those cultural practices and religious beliefs that are in direct conflict with women’s fundamental human rights.

In so doing, we must remember that culture is not static or ahistorical. Rather, it is dynamic and modifies over time with political and economic changes. Women, therefore, should be able to challenge regressive practices within their own traditions as well as protest human rights abuses from the outside without feeling that they are denying the entire culture or religion. In such struggles, women need to be assured that international consensus on matters of human rights will be applied to women, and that they can draw strength and support for their rights from the international community.

The panel on “Race, Culture, Religion, and Family in Relation to Violence Against Women” raised many questions that participants felt should be looked at in conjunction with the other themes, such as human rights and women’s sexuality. Therefore, they opted not to have a small in-depth working group on strategies for this topic, but to integrate these concerns within the various working groups; the strategies reported in the other chapters of this report often reflect on these questions.
CULTURE, RELIGION AND INTERNATIONAL LAW.

Donna Sullivan, from the International League for Human Rights, looked at the relationship between religious and cultural practices and women's rights from the perspective of international law. She emphasized that while adopting an international legal framework is not a necessary choice for all women's analysis and action on the topic, it can be very useful to addressing conflicts between cultural and/or religious rights and women's rights.

Sullivan argued that international law must be examined on at least two levels. First, the language and rhetoric of human rights law has significant political utility, even apart from any attempt to implement international conventions. Around the world, political leaders and populations at large respond strongly to the idea of inalienable rights, giving moral weight to those who organize around these concepts.

Second, with regard to implementation, states have appropriated the vocabulary of “rights” to protect religious and cultural practices that impose restrictions on women. International standards and procedures established to guarantee women's rights have been seriously challenged by countries that claim that national laws based on religion must take precedence. According to Sullivan, “They never analyze why a particular religious or cultural right is entitled to protection while a specific right guaranteed to women is not.”

A case in point is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). States argue that they cannot implement parts of the Convention because to do so would interfere with certain religious and cultural practices that are protected as “human rights.” Many countries have entered far-reaching reservations to the women’s convention, exempting themselves from demands that conflict with existing religious or cultural law. Because of such reservations, international human rights bodies — like the committee that oversees CEDAW — have not been authorized to examine how religious practice obstructs women’s rights in any specific nation. Likewise, many non-governmental groups have shied away from “culturally sensitive” abuses, such as genital mutilation, even when women within that culture are agitating for reform.

One of the advantages of using international law is that it accords significant weight to the principle of gender equality. Notions of equality are embedded in the United Nations charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other major human rights conventions. The Women's Convention goes beyond eliminating male/female inequalities to guaranteeing women a broad range of freedoms, many specifically related to being female (e.g. reproductive rights). In fact, the convention calls on states to ensure not only equality, but the “full development and advancement of women.”

Still, this guarantee must be balanced against protection of religious freedom. International law allows states to restrict religion in order to protect the rights and freedoms of others. There are certain pre-eminent rights, for example, where international law demands a blanket prohibition of a practice, such as stoning to death as a penalty for adultery. In other cases, the law requires that protection of religious freedom be balanced against the impact that a particular religious practice has on women's rights in general. In making such a determination, one must consider the degree to which a practice curtails women's rights. Does it affect more than one freedom? Does it undermine international law's core value of equality? Also one must consider the significance of the practice to religious faith and observance. How would restricting the practice affect underlying faith and daily ritual?

Take, for example, the Muslim practice of *talak*, where a man can unilaterally divorce his wife by saying “I divorce you” three times. This affects women in many ways beyond divorce because so many other rights — inheritance, property, contracts — hinge on marital status. While having a
profound detrimental effect on the rights of women, the right to unilateral divorce is only tangentially related to the core values of the Muslim faith. In this instance international law could clearly demand that international standards of equality take precedence over appeals to religious freedom.

Overall, participants agreed that reconciling culture and women’s rights is not an easy task. It often requires balancing two competing human rights values. The issue is especially problematic against the historical backdrop of Western criticisms of female human rights abuses in other countries without examining the status of women within their own borders. Still, as Sullivan argues, international law offers a useful framework for resolving competing claims between culture, religion, and female human rights.

CULTURE AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN: SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVES

Another theme discussed during the Institute was the dilemma faced by immigrant women who must reconcile conflicting cultural values and norms, while contending with sexism and racism in their own communities and in the society at large. Shamila Sen from Manavi, an organization serving South Asian battered women living in New Jersey, spoke about the "tremendous conflict of culture" South Asian women experience when they immigrate to the United States. Many are highly educated and work outside the home in jobs where they contend with Western forms of sexism as well as racism. At home they are still expected to act as traditional South Asian wives, following the gender roles prescribed by their own customs and religion, which creates a "duality of existence."

There is considerable pressure on South Asian women to stay married, even if the relationship is abusive, to protect the family honor. "You do not tell on the man who beats you," notes Sen, "because this brings shame upon the family." She asserted that arranged marriages are still the norm in most South Asian communities, and marriage is considered a life-time commitment. For some it transcends several lives as they believe in reincarnation and expect to be married to the same man in their "next life." This creates a degree of fatalism that complicates reaching out to women who are abused.

Participants also discussed the legal obstacles that immigrant women who find themselves battered face, such as United States immigration law which requires that couples remain married for two years in order to attain permanent resident status. This creates further pressure on women to stay in abusive relationships. Likewise, many women do not understand U.S. laws and consequently do not know their legal options for protection. Even those who do seek refuge in a shelter are often uncomfortable and return home due to racist remarks and culturally insensitive treatment there.

Mallika Dutt, a lawyer who works with South Asian women in a similar project, Sakhi, based in New York City, raised the dilemma faced by women when they attempt to challenge oppressive aspects of their own culture while retaining the enriching dimensions. "When minority groups must operate within a different dominant culture, it becomes complicated since each minority group wants to hold on to their identities and cultures in the face of an often racist and oppressive dominant system." Women fear that by drawing attention to negative aspects of their culture they may be reinforcing racist stereotypes of them in the dominant culture.

Dutt also spoke of the different perspectives that come from being on the minority or on the dominant side of the cultural chasm. As an Indian in the United States, she is a woman of color who experiences the racism of the dominant culture. But in India, as a highly-educated Hindu from the North, she is part of the dominant culture and stands in relation to other Indian women — those who are Muslim, or poor, or from the South — as United States middle class white women stand in relation to her. This has made Dutt aware of the
Some of the participants in the Culture and Religion panel: Mallika Dutt, Sima Wali, Govind Kelkar, Shamila Sen, and Heisoo Shin.

potential of re-creating in her own organization some of the elitism for which they rightly criticize white women. “It is very important for us to take responsibility for dealing with our own stereotypes. We also can be racist and classist to others at the same time that someone is being that way toward us.”

Govind Kelkar of the Asian Institute of Technology reiterated the principle that women “cannot take all culture uncritically,” drawing on her knowledge of growing Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism. The institutions of family and state act together, within a cultural context, as a system which serves mainly men and is promoted by men. She pointed to the 1990 population census figures in India which indicate that the male to female ratio has been increasing steadily throughout the 20th century and that higher illiteracy rates for women have persisted at 70-80 percent.

Throughout their lives, females in Asia are subject to many forms of violence including female feticide and infanticide, battery, rape, and dowry death. In fact, asserted Kelkar, from the time a female is born into the social institution of the family, she faces the constant threat of violence. Gender discrimination in the family derives its legitimacy from aspects of culture that must be challenged. The state stands behind male violence and protects individual men. Thus in fighting violence, we must also challenge the state.

Sexism ought to be addressed in the context of multiple dimensions of domination including caste, class, fundamentalism and ethnicity. Recognizing this systemic context, Kelkar sees organizing women into a broad-based movement as essential to combating gender violence. There is often a tendency among organizers, however, to assume that uneducated women do not understand their oppression and cannot articulate their subordination. “But after you talk to women, you come back wiser,” she noted. To demonstrate her point, Kelkar read a resolution on violence drafted by women — many of them landless and uneducated —at a recent women’s conference in India:

Women face specific forms of violence, rape and other forms of sexual abuse, female feticide, witch killing, sati, dowry murder and wife beating. Such violence and the continued sense of insecurity that it instills in women, keeps them bound to the home, economically exploited and socially suppressed. In the on-going struggle against violence in the family, society and the state, we recognize that the state is one of the main sources of violence and it stands behind violence committed by men against women in the family, the workplace and the neighborhood. For these reasons a mass women’s movement must focus on the struggle against violence in the home and out of it.
These women demonstrate a profound understanding of the violence that binds them, and it is their mobilization that is critical to changing cultural attitudes that lead to the acceptance of violence against women as a normal part of life.

CHRISTIANITY: FUNDAMENTALISM VERSUS LIBERATION

The group also explored linkages between Christian churches and women’s status. Monica O’Connor presented the case of Ireland where, as she put it, “women are dying because of the lack of reproductive rights. It may be more obvious where women are burned to death as in India, but Irish women die because the Catholic Church denies women access to contraceptives and safe abortion. The Church in Ireland fosters an insidious form of oppression around women’s sexuality, sexual ethics, women’s attitudes to their own bodies, and their feelings about themselves.” Church ideology traps women in abusive relationships asserted O’Connor: “Since there is no divorce in Ireland, the Church comes dangerously close to using religion to justify violence.” Marriage is for life, and no matter how abusive it may be, every union is considered “holy.”

O’Connor attributes the Church’s influence to the successful marriage between church and state. "Being Catholic has become synonymous with being Irish," she noted, a reality that has its roots in Ireland’s struggle against British rule since the 16th century. Particularly, during the first quarter of this century, catholicism became part of the nationalist struggle, and identifying as “Catholic” was a way to define yourself as “not British” during the Anglo-Irish war and the subsequent civil war in Ireland in the early 1920’s.

In contrast, Jana Chrzova noted an entirely different church/state dynamic in Czechoslovakia, prior to the democratic overthrow of the Communist state. Catholic priests and nuns were among the most oppressed people after the Communist take-over in 1948. Religious leaders and other intellectuals were imprisoned in forced labor camps and atheism was declared the official state policy. Under Communist control, contraception was widely and freely available and abortion was legal, but women had to defend their reasons for seeking an abortion before a special commission. When free abortions became legal upon demand, Chrzova observed that “We discovered that with totally free access to abortion, men lose all sense of responsibility toward contraception.”

With the recent political changes and the extension of capitalism into Czechoslovakia, the previously banned pornography industry has also been flourishing. Thus while the Catholic church is trying to impose restrictions on women’s right to abortion, it is also the only entity willing to take a stand against the spread of anti-woman pornography according to Chrzova. Several participants pointed out, however, that aligning with the Church on pornography is dangerous because their analysis and motivation are very different from those of feminists.

In recent years, anti-abortion groups in the United States and Ireland have forged powerful alliances that are eroding what little autonomy Irish women had in their reproductive decision making. In 1983 they successfully amended the Irish Constitution to equate the right to life of the fetus with that of the mother. O’Connor called this clause life-threatening. “Women have died from being denied access to drugs for cancer, for example, because of potential damage to the fetus.” The one reason that previously justified an abortion in Ireland — to save the life of the mother — is no longer available. “We have gone backwards,” she said.

Church authorities in Ireland often use other religions to justify their own oppression according to O’Connor. In 1985, a woman in Ireland lost her job as a teacher because she had an “illegitimate” child. The judge in the case said, “If you were living in a non-civilized culture you would be stoned to death.” “In Ireland,” O’Connor noted, “you only lose your job.” She cited this incident as indicative of the way in which men use Islamic religion to intimidate and divide women by creating a perceived hierarchy of religious oppression.
On a more encouraging note, the European Court of Human Rights recently ruled that Ireland in denying access to information on abortion abrogates women's fundamental human rights. The Irish government now stands in breach of this decision by denying women access to information about contraception and abortion. O'Connor described an example of how Irish women challenged both Church and State in the 70's by forming a "contraceptive train" that travelled to Northern Ireland to purchase contraceptives which they brought back into Southern Ireland as a form of civil disobedience. The authorities were so embarrassed that the women had condoms that they did not arrest them.

Another crucial connection raised was that between women, poverty and religion. For example, Magally Huggins and Ana Carcedo expressed concern about the growing presence of the "new United States soldiers," as they call the Mormons and other evangelicals from the North, who systematically infiltrate impoverished neighborhoods throughout Latin America. They spoke of the need to recognize the vulnerability of poor women and their dependent children to the offers of personal support from such organized religions, who are hostile to women's rights generally.

Exploring the messages given to women by mainstream religions, participants felt that as currently practiced, the world's major religions are most often oppressive to women and blame them for the violence they endure. Abandoning religion does not seem feasible however since many women value spirituality. Discussion therefore focused on how to re-interpret religious texts to remove their patriarchal bias and how to reclaim earlier traditions that venerate women.

The most ambitious attempt to re-interpret Catholicism in recent times comes from Latin America (and certain Asian countries) in the form of Liberation Theology. Despite the rigid hierarchy of the mainstream Catholic church, Liberation Theology has been one of the world's most radical religious movements. Liberation Theology claims the right of every individual to develop their own theology, and when interpreted through the eyes of Latin American campesinos, the Bible can become a revolutionary document, demanding justice for the poor and the oppressed. Regrettably, liberation theologians have virtually ignored the plight of women as females, failing to understand the links between women's economic and gender subordination. They have not broken with the church's tradition of oppression of women in areas like reproductive rights and lack of access to the priesthood.

Feminist theology has emerged out of the combined context of Liberation Theology and the growth of women's movements over the past two decades. Feminist theologians re-analyze religious texts from a female perspective, putting women at the center of the inquiry and popularizing interpretations that empower women. They are also developing new ethical and religious thought on issues ignored by male dominated religious institutions, such as violence against women. The influence of such feminist thought can be seen in the progressive wings of both Catholic and Protestant churches who sometimes support women's demands for justice and equality, as well as in more secular Christian women's groups like the YWCA who work to end the abuse of women in society generally.

CRITICAL ISSUES ON RELIGION AND CULTURE

Two small-group discussions focused on violence and its relation to religion and culture. The first, addressing the Catholic Church in particular, emphasized the need to reform existing institutions and to re-interpret the Bible from women's perspectives. The group cited Catholics for a Free Choice which works in both North and South America as an important example of an organization doing this. At the same time, women also need to posit new religious frameworks and reclaim ancient religious traditions that celebrate women and women's sexuality.
In the Americas there is also growing emphasis on Goddess-worship, drawing upon the imagery and rituals of pre-Christian Europe. Simone Diniz noted that in Brazil there is increasing awareness among women of ancient African traditions that celebrate fertility, sensuality, and femaleness.

Participants stressed the importance of claiming women's right to make their own ethical and spiritual decisions. The Catholic Church, for example, denies this and imposes its moral authority on women with respect to sexuality and reproduction. Women must also assume responsibility for educating young people on sexuality; otherwise the Church assumes this role by default and perpetuates repressive and sexist practices.

The other small group on violence and culture primarily focused on the question of cultural sensitivity when "outsiders" raise objections to customs of other cultures. An example discussed was when Western feminists in the seventies expressed outrage over genital mutilation without recognizing the need to follow emerging African female leadership on this issue. The group thought it essential that activists not speak for others, but facilitate the empowerment of others to speak for themselves. There is also a valid role for those in other countries to provide international support which can be critical to local success in challenging entrenched interests.

While participants agreed that agenda-setting by the "First World" is unacceptable, there is need for North-South solidarity and joint action on issues raised by women within any specific society. Serving as a catalyst for change can be appropriate provided that groups begin by initiating dialogue with women from within that culture or ethnic group. Often facilitating the provision of services to a community — supporting a women's crisis center, for example, provides a way to foster local leadership on those issues important to the women in that community.

The group encouraged more self-criticism and reflection within women's organizations about our own participation in "culture bashing." As Dutt observed, "Until we take the time to understand other groups, that is, for example, unless I learn the positive aspects of Islam [in order] to respond to someone who is trashing Islam, then I am guilty of that bashing too." One step the group recommended was that when criticizing cultural practices, one should always refer to "aspects" of a culture that are oppressive to women rather than indict entire "cultures."

Of equal concern to many is the tendency among some to accept or defend all customs simply because they are grounded in culture. Participants felt it was important to try to develop international standards that could be applied across cultures to determine the acceptability of different practices. The phrase "practices that are physically harmful to women or girls" held some appeal as a first approximation of such a standard. The group added the qualifier "physically" harmful to the phrase widely used by the World Health Association because a standard based on physical injury seemed easier to apply cross-culturally than notions of emotional or psychological harm.

While coming up with global standards is difficult and must be approached with care, most participants felt that engaging in such discussions could help to develop our agendas and clarify our differences as well as our similarities. Overall, it was understood that culture and religion influence women's lives in powerful ways and must be analyzed and challenged further in order to end the violence and abuse of women endemic to our societies.
EDUCATION TO COMBAT GENDER VIOLENCE

As the cornerstone of social change, education and consciousness raising were topics that surfaced repeatedly throughout the two-week institute. One morning was devoted to panel presentations on local organizing and education to end gender violence. Several afternoon workshops explored specific themes like education in the criminal justice system, using the media, and human rights education. All participants agreed that changing attitudes and practices through education is critical to ending violence against women.

REACHING WOMEN

Raising women's awareness of their rights is a crucial and basic part of building a movement against violence. Several participants shared their strategies for engaging women in the battle against abuse. A good example of how to organize and conduct education around battering in culturally diverse situations was described by Marsha Sfeir of Education Wife Assault (EWA) in Toronto, Canada. Instead of developing educational campaigns for Toronto's various immigrant and refugee communities from one central office, they sponsor "skills workshops" for women to develop educational materials designed specifically for their own ethnic group.

The organizers begin by holding informal consciousness raising sessions with women from different communities about their rights by going to wherever women gather: ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, community organizations, or mother's clubs. "We start," noted Sfeir, "by asking women what they feel they have a right to as women. We look at what they say they want and need and at what they feel entitled to. Sometimes we do this..."
specifically with respect to relationships by asking young women, for example, what they consider their rights on a date.” After each participant has generated her own list of “rights,” the group reflects on women’s position in society, violence against women, or violence in relationships. Eventually, individuals re-analyze their list of rights and make changes in light of the group discussion.

Recently they have taken this exercise further by introducing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an example of a consensus on rights from the larger community. Women then look at their lists in light of the declaration. If there are aspects of it that they do not feel entitled to as women, the group explores why not. “This is where we get into a lot of discussion about religious beliefs,” observed Sfeir. “They begin to name where these beliefs come from and how they can be changed.” Women are not asked to accept everything in the declaration, but it challenges their interpretation of their rights and gets them thinking.

EWA continues to work with women who show initiative and interest in changing their community’s attitudes toward women and violence. Outside support is crucial, because once they start talking about violence, women are often harassed and attacked by members of their community. One Ghanian woman, for example, had to get an unlisted phone number and leave her job because of threats of physical violence against her. Fortunately, the number of women who support such work rapidly increases once the wall of silence surrounding violence is shattered. “If women can survive that initial isolation,” noted Sfeir, “their work can progress.” But they need support from outside until support from within their community is forthcoming. Support of a woman’s husband is also important since he may be ridiculed and accused of being gay or not “man” enough to control his wife. Once there is a community of women working against violence, they can support each other and their families.

Helping women find avenues for collective action is an important adjunct to consciousness-raising. As Sfeir noted, “Raising consciousness is often easier than knowing what to do after that consciousness is raised. Sometimes knowledge just increases frustration when people feel powerless to effect change.” EWA’s approach gives women concrete skills they can use to initiate change in their community once their awareness of violence is heightened.

Everjoice Win from Zimbabwe’s Women’s Action Group (WAG) discussed her organization’s efforts to educate women about their rights. Rather than speak abstractly about “rights”—a concept that many African women find alienating—WAG uses women’s real life experiences as a starting point for discussion. They talk with women about marriage, decision-making in the family, how their husbands treat them. Soon women begin articulating their own vision of rights without using the term.

In addition to holding small group discussions, the Women’s Action Group publishes a magazine called SPEAK OUT, which is published quarterly in English, Ndebele and Shona. The magazine helps de-mystify the law by illustrating women’s rights through captioned “picture stories” based on real life events. A recent issue, for example, recounts the story of “Jeni,” a domestic worker who was able to use a local union and labor law to force her abusive employer to pay her the wages she was due. The magazine also solicits reader’s views on various topics and initiates public dialogue by publishing letters and reader’s replies.
In both its community organizing and its magazine, WAG has met with some resistance to its women-focused approach, especially among rural women. “In my country, there is a very big backlash against feminism,” noted Win. “Women say to me, ‘Your work is strengthening us but at the same time men are strengthening their resolve against us…. As it stands you are giving women so much of the burden by focusing only on us. The other side (men) are not being educated and they don’t understand our problems.’ They were not asking us to apologize for men,” noted Win, “but to include men in some of our organizing.” In response, WAG started a men’s column in SPEAK OUT for dialogue between men and women on issues related to women’s status.

The seeming clash between feminism and culture was a topic that generated much discussion. Nilda Rimonte, director of the Center for the Pacific-Asian Family in Los Angeles, felt that feminism necessarily represented a threat to most immigrant cultures which tend to be fiercely patriarchal. Citing Sfeir’s statement that EWA “respects” and does not “impose an approach” on the various cultures with which it works, she wondered how one can respect culture when it is so often in direct opposition to feminist goals and principles?

Sfeir replied that she did not see feminist goals in opposition to the goals of women from immigrant communities. “I start with the assumption that all women want to have a safe, equal and mutual relationship with those they love. When women come together and realize that what they have is not acceptable, then they begin to fashion a vision for the future. In every cultural and language group that we work in, there are always women asking questions about their lives, and we start with those questions.” In terms of methodology, she explained that “the way we work in any particular community is defined by the community itself. For me that is the basis of a feminist methodology— that we respect the experience and starting point of whomever we work with. To say that we respect it as a starting point does not mean an affirmation that wherever you are at is ok. That’s not what I’m talking about. Wherever you are has to be where we start. We define where we are going from there.”

Charlotte Bunch picked up this discussion by affirming and elaborating on an observation Hina Jilani made earlier that feminism is not one ideology, but a variety of perspectives. “What they have in common,” noted Bunch, “is that they derive out of women’s experiences and aim to empower women—which runs contrary to and threatens all of our cultures and governments. Our struggle is to counter the distortions of feminism that alienate women while recognizing that we are never going to make feminism totally acceptable to those whose domination it challenges.”

Several participants noted how feminism in their countries is often opposed by dismissing it as a “western,” imported ideology not appropriate for third world organizing. Qiyamah Rahman noted a similar tendency among many African-American women in the US who reject feminism as a “white women’s” creation. But she eloquently laid bare this myth:

“Women in the African American community have a history of resistance and activism that was feminist long before the term became in vogue. There is a rich history of women’s activism in every country of the world prior to European contact and imperialism. That is part of the myth, part of the conspiracy to dissuade people from embracing feminism. It is not a white women’s thing, not a European thing. As women of color we must resist the Euro-
Rahman noted that the shift to a broader “human rights” framework could prove extremely useful in the African-American community where many women have been reluctant to embrace “women’s rights” because it seems to place them in opposition to men.

**GETTING THE WORD OUT**

In addition to reaching women, a campaign to end male violence must educate the community at large. Participants brought with them a wealth of experience and ideas about how to change public attitudes toward violence against women.

One workshop focused on the use of media to influence public opinion. All participants agreed that television, radio, video, and print media are powerful agents of social change. Most had extensive experience interacting with the press and some groups had orchestrated major outreach campaigns. Women emphasized the importance of educating journalists and cultivating allies within the various media. Pat Mahmoud’s organization, Women in Nigeria, for example, held a workshop for the National Association of Women Journalists to encourage increased and more enlightened coverage of women’s issues. “Without allies,” noted Pypops, “the press does not consider women’s issues important enough to cover.”

Win cautioned, however, against framing violence and other important concerns strictly as “women’s issues.” To do so risks having violence marginalized. “Articles about gender violence will appear on the ‘women’s page’ buried between the recipes and the knitting patterns. Are we as women’s organizations satisfied with being compartmentalized in this way?”

Editorial control was also seen as a problem since most participants could recall experiences where the media had distorted, sanitized, or sensationalized information they had supplied. “We want to use the media, not be used by them,” Win observed. She encouraged women to take control of media situations whenever possible: negotiate interview questions ahead of time so that important points can be made; produce your own radio programs and pay for air time if need be; and request to review articles or radio shows that use you as a source before they are released publicly.

Various other strategies for raising public consciousness about gender violence were described. Siriporn Skrobanek recounted how her group convinced thirty Bangkok bus lines to post signs advertising the shelter’s phone number on the inside of buses. A survey of women calling the shelter revealed that the bus ads were very effective in reaching them. In Peru, the Movimiento Manuela Ramos produced “fotonovelas,” adult picture stories that depict life-like dilemmas about gender violence. A recent example tells the story of a young girl who becomes pregnant as a result of being raped. Canadian women have produced stickers proclaiming, “This Promotes Violence Against Women,” to plaster over sexist and violent advertising.

Several women emphasized the benefits of using alternative media and popular theater. Win mentioned drama and pop culture reaching a wider audience in Zimbabwe, as when well-known singers produced songs about AIDS, several of which have become big hits. Likewise the Musasa domestic violence project in her country worked with a community theater group on a play about wife abuse which the troop now takes on the road, performing for ever wider audiences. According to Rana Nashashibi,
popular theater has also been instrumental in reaching women in Yemen, some of whom removed their veils in public for the first time during a street drama. After a Thai workshop on violence for women fiction writers, one wrote a story on rape that is now being made into a television mini-series.

**TRAINING PROFESSIONALS**

Change in the treatment of victims of gender violence also depend on educating professionals to be aware of and sensitive to such abuse. Regrettably, many of those who are in a position to help—such as clergy and police—make the situation worse by acting out society’s attitudes of blaming the victim. Programs have begun in some countries to train police, but very few have targeted other professionals such as doctors, nurses, social workers, judges, or the clergy as well. One notable exception is the Colectivo Feminista Sexualidade Saude in Sao Paulo which has begun educating health professionals on the signs and treatment of gender violence.

Magally Huggins told participants about their program in Venezuela to educate police about sexual violence and battery and compared her organization’s experience to that of Peru. In Venezuela they began training police about a year and a half ago, one year later than Peru. Both programs cover similar material but the Peruvian program works exclusively with women officers whereas the Venezuelan training targets both women and men. The Peruvian program also has women lawyers assigned to individual police stations to assist women.

Both programs confront the difficulty of working with an institution that is itself violent and whose members generally share an ideology of male supremacy and machismo. Huggins noted that many male officers use violence against their own partners, making their attitudes even harder to change. Even so, her organization persists in its work with police as a means to improve the services available to women. “Despite their limitations, police stations are a point of contact with women in crisis,” she observed. “They are where many women go.”

Participants urged that information on gender violence be incorporated into the academic curricula of all relevant professions including lawyers, doctors, nurses, social workers and clergy. Roberta Francis, Director of the New Jersey Division on Women, described in her panel presentation their efforts to conduct public education on domestic violence throughout the state, including the development of specialized manuals for health professionals, the clergy, and educators. Yet, Lori Heise pointed out, even in the United States and Canada training on violence is included in less than half of all medical school programs, those that incorporate it include on average fewer than three hours of instruction, in spite of the fact that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women in the U.S.

**HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION**

The group also urged greater attention to the incorporation of women and violence issues in human rights education. Participants suggested that basic information on human rights should be incorporated into children’s school curricula and into the curricula of professional schools like law and medicine. Likewise existing “legal literacy” programs should be broadened to include a basic understanding of human rights and of how these apply to women specifically.
Many saw the recently launched "Decade for Human Rights Education" introduced to participants by Sarada Balagopalan as a useful mechanism for education about women's rights and gender violence. The Decade is an NGO initiative aimed at encouraging human rights education around the world. Its New York-based office serves as a clearinghouse for training materials and a coordinating center for activities, most of which will be initiated regionally. Participants endorsed the Decade's objectives and agreed to carry its message back to their home countries. Some plan to participate in a women's task force to ensure that women's concerns are given proper weight and visibility in the evolving Decade.

**STRATEGIES**

Women and Women's Groups: To increase the understanding of women's rights as human rights among women and build opposition to gender violence as a violation of those rights.

1. Prepare basic fact sheets, pamphlets and/or visual materials reconceptualizing the notion of human rights to include violence against women and other women's rights.

2. Gather, discuss, and summarize in a simple but provocative form to use for consciousness raising key documents like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

3. Examine your country's Constitution and lead discussions analyzing the rights it affords women related to inheritance, divorce, citizenship, legal standing, etc.

4. Train legal promoters to make women aware of their rights. Seek out existing grassroots women's networks (cultural groups, health promoters, mother's clubs) and work with them to integrate information on women's rights into their on-going themes and programs.

5. Create educational material appropriate to each constituency (appropriate literacy level, graphics, language, etc.) and/or offer skill-building workshops to women on how to develop educational materials on violence for their community.

Media: To educate existing media about gender violence and women's human rights and to develop various media for our educational work.

1. Identify and cultivate allies in the press. Offer journalists more information on gender violence and help them develop a framework for reporting on the issue.

2. Meet with alternative media people to encourage them to take up the issue and offer to speak out on interviews and provide programs around the theme.

3. Make a video or audio tape about violence and send it to local television or radio stations, especially in rural areas that may not have access to individuals to speak on the topic. Also, get it played in waiting rooms of local family planning clinics, hospitals, etc.

4. Request that a newspaper or radio/TV station do longer, more detailed articles on the subject in combination with community campaigns on recognized dates like March 8th (International Women's Day) or December 10th (Human Rights Day). Coordinate this with the proposed 16 Days Against Gender Violence. (See final section of report.)
5. Use “letters to the editor” on current events related to violence (or a publication’s coverage of such events) as a means of raising consciousness on the issue. Monitor and comment on language used by the media that tends to obscure the issue or blame the woman.

6. Do a press release, article, or interview when returning home from this Institute and whenever you can call attention to these issues through your group’s activities.

Public Institutions and Popular Education: To create more mass awareness of violence against women as a human rights abuse.

1. Identify forums and conferences where workshops on violence could be offered and approach organizers about including the theme; offer to speak or lead such events.

2. Contact local groups such as rotary clubs, church groups, health promoter networks and offer to give a workshop on gender violence.

3. Educate religious leaders on family violence. Articulate links between religious values like peace and harmony and peace in the home. Offer alternative interpretations on religious texts that emphasize respect for women, equality, etc. Give workshops to local seminary students.

4. Work with teachers to incorporate information on conflict resolution, human rights, and gender violence into school curricula through current programs in areas like human rights or education for living as well as by creating new ones.

5. Collaborate with researchers on the need for gender specific data and suggest topics and approaches that would contribute to the work of women’s groups on these themes.

6. Work to get information on gender violence incorporated into the academic training of all professional groups, such as health care providers and social workers.

7. Develop training programs for the police about appropriate ways to respond to domestic violence or rape victims.

8. Use stickers that say “This Promotes Gender Violence” to protest sexist or violent advertising and post signs about the issue in public places such as subways or bus stops.

9. Approach popular singers, comics, theater groups or other entertainers about using their art to educate about gender violence. Serve as a resource person or participate in developing such material.

10. Develop street theater to encourage reflection on gender violence and discrimination against women. Incorporate interactive techniques in your outreach campaigns.

11. Develop fotonovelas about violence and make them available in public waiting rooms, through women’s groups, or through other existing networks.
The law represents both an agent of women's oppression and an instrument to combat it. Often the law functions to limit a woman's autonomy and denies her access to jobs and property. As the experience of participants showed, however, laws can serve to liberate women, expanding their rights and encouraging social change. Participants examined both the repressive and the promising aspects of the law as it applies to the issue of violence against women. While there was no panel specifically on the law, it was discussed throughout the areas included in this report. This chapter refers in particular to the strategies discussed by the working group on violence and the legal system.

**PROVIDING A FRAMEWORK**

During a panel on “Gender Violence, Development, Militarism and the State,” Margaret Schuler of the Women, Law, and Development project of OEF International, presented a simple yet powerful way of thinking about the law. Her framework, reproduced in the diagram below, divides the law into three main components: content, structure and culture. The content refers to its substantive provisions—what it says about inheritance, assault, proof of rape, etc. The structure refers to the courts, the police, and other administrative agencies. The culture refers to society’s collective attitudes and beliefs about the legal system and those who interact with it.

Working to affect each of these components in turn calls for a different type of strategy. Changing the content of the law requires legal and social research to document the law’s impact, draft alternative legislation, raise consciousness,
and lobby to get a new law passed. Affecting the structure of the law requires advocacy, training, and quite often, litigation to force reluctant bureaucracies to reform. Changing legal culture requires grassroots education, media campaigns, and training of professionals. Schuler also noted that judicial and police biases and stereotypes are often among the most difficult aspects of the legal system to change.

Using the law as a tool for social change demands a coordinated campaign aimed at all three aspects of the legal system. Frequently women’s groups succeed in reforming the content of the law but the situation for women remains the same because the structure or culture of the law does not change accordingly. Lack of access and exclusion remain in effect, and women may not understand their newly found rights and/or the police and judges may refuse to enforce them. Participants analyzed the law of their various countries in their working groups. Woo-Seoup Han identified the substantive deficiencies in Korean laws regarding rape and domestic violence. For example, the only protection from violence available to women in Korean law is divorce. No provisions exist for “protection” or “stay away” orders as in some other parts of the world. Furthermore, rape is defined very narrowly, recognizing only forced intercourse and not other forms of coercive sexual violence.

Lata P.M. noted that in India, feminists have had to create new laws to combat forms of violence once completely outside of court jurisdiction. Dowry-related death, where a woman is killed, or driven to suicide, because her husband or in-laws want to acquire a larger dowry through remarriage, is such an example. These incidents became so frequent that the women’s movement pushed for a new law that would make dowry harassment itself a crime. This gives women recourse to the police and courts before the harassment escalates to forced suicide or murder. Feminists also helped establish a new law which obligates the police to investigate any “suspicious” death of a woman within seven years of her marriage.

Indian women have also organized around the selective abortion of female fetuses. Activists in Maharashtra have succeeded in getting a law passed that makes amniocentesis for sex selection a crime. Still, the practice persists, partly because the ban is poorly enforced and because the “culture of the law” still informs the practice.
The group shared many more examples of how the law's structure and culture exacerbates deficiencies in its content. In both Venezuela and Nigeria, rape laws require corroboration of the woman's testimony, usually in the form of medical evidence of penetration and of resistance on the part of the victim. But as Pat Mahmoud of Nigeria pointed out, in rural areas medical facilities are distant and practitioners are not trained in gathering evidence of rape. Similarly in Caracas, the law requires an immediate exam by a forensic physician, but the office of legal medicine is closed on the weekend.

**CHANGING THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

Strategies for effecting substantive changes in the legal system were a recurring focus of discussion during the Institute. Two main approaches emerged: mobilize a small group of people who would push directly for reform; or mount a campaign to raise consciousness among the public in order to create grassroots pressure for change. While the first approach may be more expedient and is often useful, it risks gaining "victories" that don't reflect the true needs or desires of the people. Further, little is likely to change unless a significant number of people understand and support the reforms achieved. On the other hand, legal changes can be the mechanism that spurs changes in cultural attitudes, and educating women about their newfound rights can serve as a powerful organizing tool. Both approaches should be used depending on the context, but we must remember that no one strategy succeeds alone in achieving change in all three aspects of the legal system.

Roberta Clarke observed that when facing a dictatorship or fundamentalist regime, neither approach is likely to succeed. Hina Jilani noted in those cases militant action and widespread protesting may be necessary. Totalitarian regimes generally fear any form of destabilization. Of course, the degree to which this approach is feasible depends largely upon the ruthlessness of the regime.

Looking at the question of legal change in fundamentalist regimes also raised the issue of whether religion provides a proper basis for the formulation of law. The problem, noted Jilani, is that in many nationalist struggles, religion is equated with national identity and becomes the excuse for oppressing minority or politically weak groups. The experience in Pakistan, she added, shows the danger of a legal system based on male interpretation of Islamic law. Many legal interpretations oppressive to women are justified in the name of Islam even when they have little or no basis in the Islamic religious texts. This raises the question of whether to push for reform by reinterpreting religious law (one can defend abortion using Islam, for example), or by rejecting religion as a basis for law altogether.

In seeking legal change, using case studies and research to expose the bias and inequality in the law can be particularly effective. It is often more persuasive to argue from a case where real individuals have been wronged rather than from abstract principles. Providing concrete, specific proposals for change is also crucial. Participants stressed the benefit of borrowing language and model legislation from other jurisdictions to use as blueprints for reform.

The final working group emphasized the need for researchers and activists to cooperate in exposing legal biases and in bringing out the relationship between law and socio-economic and political conditions. Researchers should be encouraged to use participatory research techniques to mitigate the effect of their pre-conceived biases. At the same time, activists and
service providers can supply researchers with data and case studies to help them in the analysis of the impact of the law. Activists should also translate law and research findings into everyday language in order to help create acceptance and use of new laws benefiting women.

The positive experiences of legal literacy programs and grassroots organizing around women’s rights were a highlight of this session. Jilani noted that training “legal promoters” at the community level has proven very successful in some countries, especially in rural areas. Such promoters serve mostly as educators and motivators. When training extends into aspects of the “practice” of law, programs have encountered resistance from local bar associations which see this empowerment as threatening.

Mobilizing other community workers to take up the issues of women’s rights and legal literacy is an important element of working with the law. Often it is more efficient and effective to work through existing networks (women’s clubs, extension workers, credit schemes etc.) than to create separate groups of women’s rights promoters. In all of these efforts it is important to stay in touch with the people, to use their language and to reflect their concerns.

A final area of strategy for changing the legal system covered by the participants was that of raising the gender consciousness of professionals who work in the enforcement of the laws: police, judges, and other government personnel. The Institute sessions dealing with education and training in this area are reported in the previous chapter on “Education to Combat Gender Violence.” Indeed, much of the discussion in that chapter is central to the process of legal change, especially with regard to transforming the culture of the law.

**STRATEGIES**

The participants felt it was important to reconceptualize law and legal norms in the context of feminist struggles. Based on the various Institute sessions in this area, they outlined the following law and justice system strategies for the short, middle, and long term:

1. Use existing laws for legal activism. Seek legal reform through re-interpretation of accepted laws by applying them to women’s situations, such as using international human rights conventions for addressing violence against women.

2. Question the constitutionality of biased laws and justice system practices. Make linkages between violations of human rights and laws that are oppressive to women in many areas including personal and family law, labor rights, violence against women, and reproductive rights.

3. Affirm and argue for the universality of women’s human rights regardless of religion or culture.

4. Use international law and standards to push for reform, either through cases brought in international fora or by using international principles to set standards for domestic law.

5. Compile information on laws in different countries related to sexual assault, domestic violence, etc. and develop some common responses to issues like evidentiary requirements.

6. Develop concrete legislative proposals for change adapting language and structure from other jurisdictions.
7. Argue for recognition of women’s rights as human rights by building case studies showing how the justice system failed individual women.

8. Suggest concrete mechanisms to improve the enforcement of legal provisions and the implementation of various laws, in addition to changing the content of the law.

9. Sue individuals and organizations that fail to assure women their legal rights. Where possible seek monetary damages in addition to punitive measures.

10. Advocate for victims’ rights within the justice system. Lobby for the legal representation of victims as a right. Develop victim advocate programs to accompany survivors throughout the justice system.

11. Analyze all legislative proposals for their potential impact on women. Use the findings to mobilize women either for or against such proposals.

12. Pursue test cases to establish legal precedents on important points of law.

13. Where no legal system is in place (e.g., Palestine), do consciousness raising among the people on the issue of gender violence.

14. Involve the judiciary in dialogue and discussion about gender bias in the courts. Expose judges to feminist arguments by using them in court.

15. Provide training to those who administer and enforce the law on the dynamics of rape and woman abuse. Try to sensitize them to the concerns of women.

16. Highlight the role of criminal justice agencies in the national development process.

17. Train community members to serve as “legal promoters” to help inform women about their rights.

18. Revise the curricula of law schools to include more training in a feminist approach to human rights and international law. Train upcoming lawyers in the prosecution of rape and domestic violence cases.
CONCLUSION:
LOCAL ORGANIZING
AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

During the second half of the Institute, participants concentrated on developing strategies for the future. The strategies sections at the end of each chapter represent the collective wisdom of the working groups that formed in those areas. This conclusion presents some of the practical aspects of women's organizing raised at the Institute, as well as the international networking and forms of collaborative action favored by participants. It also reflects on group discussion of problems facing women organizers, from how to deal with controversial issues to questions of process and leadership.

The tone was set by Charlotte Bunch who declared: "Perhaps the most important thing we need to do, which underlies everything we've been discussing, is organize. Organize. Organize. All the great ideas in the world will mean little if we don't also organize people to act on them."

DEFINING FEMINISM FOR OURSELVES

The session on internal problems in women's organizing was opened by Bunch with a discussion of the term "feminism" and difficulties that arise with using it in our work. While feminism has many definitions and is often misunderstood, she emphasized that it has also been consciously manipulated by the media and forces opposed to women's advancement in order to scare women away from organizing on our own behalf. Everyone who works on issues associated with women needs to develop an understanding and definition of the concept for herself. Whether one chooses to use the term or not is a strategic question, but we must be able to respond to questions about it with clarity, or our fear of it will be used against us.
Bunch referred to a debate on this issue that had been decisive for her during an international workshop held in Bangkok on “Feminist Ideology and Structures in the First Half of the Decade for Women,” sponsored by the UN Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development in 1979. At that time, Vina Mazumdar of India noted that it is not the word but the goals of feminism that established powers oppose, and that if we abandon this term, they will attack each “new word” we use. That workshop was one of the early efforts by women from around the globe to define feminism for themselves across national boundaries and the North/South divide. Their definition, used by many since then, was presented at the Institute as a starting point for discussion. The Bangkok report defined feminism in terms of both individual and social goals:

1. the achievement of women’s equality, dignity, and freedom of choice through women’s power to control their own lives and bodies within and outside the home, and

2. the removal of all forms of inequity and oppression through the creation of a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

This definition coincides with the assertion of women’s right to full and autonomous personhood advanced by participants at the Institute. The understanding of personhood that evolved in the group’s discussions includes both a woman’s right to control her body and the right to citizenship—to have a voice in the public arena. Participants described different ways that they have approached feminism on both of these levels, and how they have both used and not used the term in their work. While many had initially avoided the word because of the stereotypes that accompany it, most felt that women clarifying its meaning in their own contexts and regions was an empowering process.

Participants agreed that feminism involves bringing women’s perspectives, realities, and problems into public discourse and away from the margins of the private sphere. This perspective challenges the current public/private divide, which perpetuates the oppression of women by keeping the daily abuses of power in women’s lives away from political scrutiny. For most, feminism also requires looking at gender not in isolation from, but in relation to other factors like race, class, sexual orientation, age and nationality. This involves challenging various forms of power and domination of one group by another, since the acceptance of any form of domination reinforces the idea that it is legitimate for one group or person to control another.

During the course of the Institute, diverse views of feminism emerged reinforcing the idea that feminism is a vibrant concept adapted by women to their own situations. One group on women and culture stated that feminist consciousness and activity does not progress along a linear path with “Western feminism” as the most advanced stage. Rather, feminism emerges in response to the social, economic, and cultural obstacles women in any region face. Above all, as Mallika Dutt maintained, “we must always approach each other’s agendas with respect.”

Hina Jilani emphasized that “feminism is not one ideology but a variety of perspectives.” As such, it is not about a single woman’s reality or analysis, but grows through the development of perspectives from differing realities. Further it is not simply about women’s issues but is a
transformative approach to all issues brought about by bringing women into the conversation at every level of deliberation and in every institution. Finally, feminism is not only for women, but is a politics cast from women's lives which is available for all to explore and develop further.

Part of the systematic attack on feminism and the propaganda warfare against those who challenge the status quo, Bunch noted, is the manipulation of stereotypes and issues raised by feminists to frighten women away from the movement. For example, many participants reported on how feminism gets labeled “Western” or bourgeois in Third World countries, while in the United States, feminists are often called communist or socialist in a similar attempt to discredit us.

One of the most common scare words is lesbian, and the taboo surrounding discussions of it even within women’s groups reflects the power of anti-feminism in our societies. Where there is such a powerful taboo, Bunch suggested that we need to look at what lies behind this forbidden subject. What is it about lesbianism that men hate and women fear discussing? Why is “lesbian baiting” often successful as a means of intimidating women who are challenging social norms? Feminists need to deal with this issue in a straightforward way that includes looking at lesbianism in relation to other topics, rather than ignoring or isolating it. Only then will we move toward divesting the assignation “lesbian” of its power to silence women.

Several participants recounted experiences of lesbian organizing in their countries. Lourdes Bueno told how the Lesbian Feminist Collective in the Dominican Republic formed in response to the dominant movement line that lesbians must wait for the “feminist revolution” before their needs could be addressed. Just as the women’s movement had rejected this sexist line from the male-dominated Left, lesbians in the Dominican Republic organized separately in response to such marginalization. The Collective called a national meeting on these issues and asserted their independent status and refusal to continue asking for approval from a homophobic movement. They demanded that feminists address specific forms of oppression which lesbians experience as part of the oppression of women, such as harassment from the police, healthcare professionals, landlords, and employers.

Participants looked at how this issue affects feminist organizing, including the pressure women’s groups face in financing their programs if any of them appear to be aimed at the lesbian population. This is similar to women’s fear of losing income and/or child custody if they “come out” as lesbians. Many felt that feminists must defend the “fundamental human right to choose one’s lover or life partner.” Simone Diniz emphasized the need to conceptualize homophobia as a graphic form of sexism and to see that just as we are asserting that “women’s rights are human rights,” so also “lesbian issues are women’s issues.”

The group acknowledged difficulties in dealing with this issue on many levels. Lata P.M. pointed out that it is hard to raise any matters of female sexual desire and sexual expression in some cultures. Heisoo Shin voiced concern that discussions be based on mutual respect between lesbians and straights, recognizing that it is not heterosexuality per se which is oppressive but coerced institutionalized heterosexuality. Participants explored conditions that facilitate open dialogue where such difficulties can be aired. Lesbianism, the group concluded, can be raised on many levels: as an issue of respect for diversity; as a human right
to individual choice; as an aspect of violence against women; or as a critique of the way compulsory heterosexuality controls women’s reproduction and sexuality. Regardless of approach, most agreed that unless women’s movements deal with homophobia and their difficulty in responding clearly to lesbianism, the battle against sexism will be obstructed.

QUESTIONS OF PROCESS AND LEADERSHIP

Another aspect of feminist organizing targeted for attention was the confusion surrounding leadership and power within women’s movements. Bunch observed that one reason women’s groups have trouble with the question of leadership is their legitimate concern about issues of power, authority, and domination which are usually associated with traditional forms of leadership. Given the centrality of opposition to domination in feminism, we tend to see power as “power over” and thus oppose or shy away from it. However, many feminists have suggested that we also need to regard power as an enabling force that is critical to making change. The difficulty lies in trying to create groups that utilize power to mobilize energy for change but must still contend with power-over institutions in society. Often groups duplicate societies’ oppressive patterns in the struggle to end their own oppression. Women have tried to avoid this problem by focusing on the importance of process. Feminists have created a wide variety of types of groups ranging from structureless collectives to highly organized forms for control of power within a group. As both Roberta Clarke and Ana Carcedo noted, their organizations have changed their structures almost every year in the effort to deal with such issues. It is not surprising that women have difficulty creating enduring structures that address power and leadership in new ways, since our societies do not operate from such values and make it difficult for alternate forms to survive.

Women’s collectives generally have worked best among relatively homogeneous small groups with similar experiences and minimal differences in power and privilege among the members. Since feminists are committed to diversity in our organizations, our task is harder, and especially so in seeking to build larger organizations. Not having any structure has also proven not to be the answer, since lack of acknowledged power and routes of access to it usually reinforces a hidden elite and produces what has been labeled the “tyranny of structurelessness.”

Feminists have often tried to deny that there are leaders in women’s groups, but as Bunch noted, whenever there is motion, leadership is happening. If it is stifled or unacknowledged, it often remains hidden and manipulative. Jilani observed that when leadership was hidden in a Pakistani group to which she belonged, it still evolved but was held back, and the group eventually ceased to function. At the same time, when there is a dominant personality, and everything revolves around one person, things fall apart when she is no longer there, especially if, as Sakala commented, she has not encouraged new leadership development and delegated tasks and responsibilities to others.

Lata pointed out that even when groups are run collectively and decisions are made by consensus, subtle pressure by unidentified leaders may emerge. Rather than hiding leaders, participants felt that women’s groups need open means of acknowledging various types of leaders and holding them accountable. This facilitates dealing directly with competitiveness, hidden agendas, and other problems of power imbalance. The goal should be having
Simone Diniz and Shamima Ali explaining strategies from a working group.

leadership that empowers other women and enables them to grow as they participate in making things happen, so that more female leaders emerge.

Several participants described women’s efforts to build democratic leadership structures by sharing leadership and by valuing many of its aspects in different people, rather than setting up a hierarchy with only one valued leader at the top. Still, as we seek to build such structures and support for the leadership that emerges from within, it may be difficult to deal with outside demands that do not accommodate shared or alternative forms of leadership. It is important that we learn how to support leaders without converting them into “stars” as the society often pressures us to do, and after which we come to resent them even though we put them there.

Jilani also reminded the group that women’s public leadership doesn’t only evolve from within — sometimes people from outside take on leadership roles and speak for the movement even if they have not been part of it previously. This may cause resentment within women’s group, but often such women represent new and diverse constituencies whose voice needs to be heard. Different types of leadership need to be encouraged and accountability must become part of our organizing on various levels.

The distinction between structure and process, suggested by Susan Roche, may be helpful in seeking to deal with these issues. Structure defines the forms of organization and lines of responsibility of the group, but the process by which the group functions can still vary. Thus, the structure might limit the flexibility of process, but this can be a good compromise. For instance, you may have a hierarchical structure, but utilize collective decision making as an empowering process that involves all the group and not just the acknowledged leaders.

Roxanna Carrillo and Gina Cedamanos reported on the organization of the women’s movement in Lima, Peru as an example of consciously creating structures that are democratic, and that acknowledge and build women’s leadership simultaneously. Since 1986, they have had a city-wide coalition of women’s groups and non-governmental organizations with a coordinating collective of 7 women, elected by all participants who view themselves as part of the movement. This group is in touch with a much wider circle of representatives from each women’s group, who, in turn, are in touch with large numbers of women in Lima. Approximately 20-25 groups are involved. The
coordinating collective represents the public face of the movement and is responsible for circulating information and contacting group representatives as well as speaking for the movement in public. This structure has facilitated the effectiveness of both individual groups and the citywide movement.

Jilani commented that in Lahore they had tried such a structure which ultimately fell apart when the accountability of the representatives became suspect. Qiyamah Rahman noted that some national coalitions in the US operate similarly, but the coordinating committee often becomes elitist since only people in privileged positions can fund their participation and give the time and energy required to be part of the leadership.

Another aspect of women's leadership discussed focused on women in electoral politics. Ruth Mandel of the Rutgers Center for the American Woman and Politics presented their research findings indicating that women do make a difference in politics when they reach a critical mass and/or when they are connected to movements outside the government. Since most women enter politics through issues rather than a general ambition for power, they tend to retain these community concerns, but their relationship to women's movements needs maintenance on both sides. The dynamics of power that accompany elected office tend to separate such women from their bases unless an effort is made to keep lines of communication open. Participants debated the importance of having women in government, but agreed that strategies for supporting such women while also demanding accountability from them were vital to their serving women's interests effectively.

Throughout this discussion, participants reiterated the need to acknowledge that leadership is vital to women's movements, and must be supported and developed more openly. However, the creation of structures based on non-hierarchical and respectful relations between members who are not equal in power is not easy in our world. This is an area where we must continue to experiment with as much clarity and dialogue as possible so that we can learn from one another and not obscure the problems.

**SKILLS BUILDING AND NETWORKING**

Some Institute sessions focused on concrete skills and provided opportunities to learn computer literacy, fund raising, video camera operation, and self-defense techniques. In the computer literacy workshop, Kathleen Casey taught participants how to use the electronic mail, which can assist our communication and networking ability. The fundraising workshop led by Liz Coit and Joanne Sandier provided an opportunity for participants to share fundraising experiences and discuss major international funders that assist grassroots women's projects. The self-defense workshop, conducted by the Center for Anti-Violence Education, introduced basic self-defense techniques and ideas about how to use self-defense as part of teaching about gender violence. Throughout the sessions, Lourdes Bueno operated a video camera and invited participants to learn how to operate it and to experiment with its uses on the spot.

The participants proposed a variety of international networking strategies to facilitate future collaboration: regular exchange of papers, research materials, information on legislation, and organizational newsletters; more intensive use of existing international publications, such as the “International Newsletter Against Violence Against Women” edited by Rahman—this might include sending in one-page submissions that could be easily reproduced in the newsletter;
utilization and support of existing regional and international networks and "clearinghouses" which address violence against women, such as the ISIS Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network; compilation of an information sheet or resource book listing all such networks, resource books, resource people and so on; formation of a women's task force for the NGO Decade of Human Rights Education; coordinating responses to urgent cases or upcoming conferences, such as the UN Conference on Human Rights; and planning a concerted international action around a specific theme and/or time period to heighten public awareness of gender violence. The networking efforts initiated at the 1991 Institute have been extensive. Several participants have written about the Institute's process, ideas and strategies and circulated this material to all. For example, the final issue of the "International Newsletter Against Violence Against Women" (which unfortunately has gone out of existence) featured the strategies developed by the working groups at the Institute. A few participants have conducted workshops or sessions in their own regions building on the Institute and feeding back those results to the Global Center as well. A number of participants have met again at other regional or international conferences and strategized there about bringing women, violence and human rights onto those agendas. Other networking occurs informally between participants, as well.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AND UN PETITION CAMPAIGN

The major international networking efforts undertaken by the Center as a result of the Institute have been coordinating the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign and the Petition drive to the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights. From November 25th to December 10th, 1991, the Center along with Institute participants and other interested women's groups around the world conducted the first International Campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. Its goals were to build more awareness of gender violence globally, create consciousness of it as a human rights violation, and facilitate greater networking among women leaders working in this area. Participants at the Institute choose this 16-day period to link violence against women and human rights symbolically. The campaign began November 25th, International Day Against Violence Against Women declared by the first Feminist Encuentro for Latin America and the Caribbean in 1981 at Bogota, Colombia. The day was chosen to commemorate the brutal murder of the Mirabal sisters by the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic on this date in 1960. The campaign ended December 10th, International Human Rights Day which marks the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed in 1948. This period also included December 1, World AIDS Day, and December 6th, the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre when 14 women engineering students in Canada were murdered by a man for being "feminists."

A large variety of events occurred around the world during the 16 Days, highlighting many forms of gender violence as violations of human rights. For example, In San Jose, Costa Rica representatives of 50 women's groups met to develop a policy paper addressing violence against women to be used by policy making agencies throughout the country. In London, thousands of women from all over Britain united at Trafalgar Square to mark November 25th and demand "an end to the double standard which
condones male violence.” In Fiji, the Women’s Crisis Centre coordinated a series of panels, radio and television discussions, street theater and film events. A coalition of women’s organizations in Cyprus convened over the 16 Days and sent decrees to their government and the UN calling on them to recognize that violence against women violates human rights. Bat-Elam, the Israeli human rights organization, conducted a “road race” and a memorial service for women who have been murdered throughout the country to raise awareness about gender violence. Korean women’s organizations, held public demonstrations and enacted a “memorial service” for the victims of gender violence. In Bombay, Delhi, Dublin, Bangkok, and São Paulo, women’s groups produced posters on women’s rights as human rights aimed at public and judiciary education. A travelling poster and slide exhibit launched in Ottawa during the 16 Days went on to Vancouver, Vienna, and Washington. The Center has begun to hear of plans for 1992, when we will coordinate the second 16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign.

A major component of the 16 Days Campaign was the launching of a worldwide petition drive aimed at the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights to be held in 1993. The petition calls upon the Preparatory Committee of the conference to comprehensively address women’s human rights at every level of its proceedings and to recognize gender violence as a human rights issue. There will be regional meetings in 1992 in Costa Rica, Thailand, and Tunisia to prepare regional human rights agendas. These meetings could influence the international human rights agenda for decades to come and present an opportunity for those concerned with women’s human rights to mobilize to voice our demands. Women are organizing regionally to have petitions gathered before the conferences and are planning public events in several countries to call attention to the violation of women’s human rights prior to the regional meetings. In addition, various women’s groups around the world are identifying both government and non-government representatives who might attend the 1993 Human Rights Conference and raising the issues of women’s human rights and gender violence in their countries with them. (See Appendix D for the petition and a list of sponsors.)

On March 13th 1992, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership together with the International Women’s Tribune Centre and the World YWCA, delivered the first round of 75,000 signatures to the petition to the UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali. The petition has been circulated in 78 countries in every region of the world, and translated into 12 languages. We have extended the campaign until September, 1992 and expect to have gathered 150 thousand signatures for the next preparatory meeting in Geneva calling for recognition of women’s human rights and denouncing domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, traffic in women, female infanticide and all forms of gender violence as violations of human rights.

FUTURE INSTITUTES

The Center will hold its second Women’s Global Leadership Institute from June 14-27, 1992. As a result of the evaluations provided by the 1991 participants, we will be making small changes in the structure of the 1992 Institute agenda. These include more time spent in the same intensive working group on strategies and more focus on the issues of feminist organizing, leadership and process.
However the overall content and approach of the first Institute was affirmed by participants and will provide the context for the second one as well. Twenty women at the forefront of the struggle against gender violence in countries as diverse as Ecuador, Turkey, Sudan, China, France, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, and South Africa will attend. Drawing upon the work of this first Institute, they will elaborate the strategies to combat violence against women and further define the role of the international human rights community in ending this violence.

The Center's three-year cycle focusing on the theme of Women, Violence, and Human Rights will culminate in a Strategic Planning Institute in the spring of 1993 in lieu of a Leadership Institute that year. This will be a small one week gathering of women leaders in the area of gender violence and human rights. They will assess strategies for the next three years with respect to gender violence and human rights, including planning around the 1993 UN Human Rights Conference; the UN Year of the Family and Population Conference in 1994; and the UN World Conference on Women in 1995. They will also advise the Center on its future work in this area.


Participants relaxing:
Roxanna Carrillo, Hina Jilani, Siriporn Skrobanek, Syarifah Sabaroedin, and Qiyamah Rahman.
APPENDIX A

WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS

SHAMIMA ALI, FIJI
Women’s Crisis Centre

The Women’s Crisis Centre’s major function is as a counselling service for women and children survivors of violence. They also conduct campaigns on women and have an educational program on violence against women. The Center was founded in 1984 as a counseling service and a 24-hour hotline, at a time when no other services for women victims of violence existed, nor was rape generally acknowledged. Along with their work conducting workshops and talks on gender violence, the Centre has received a 2-year grant from the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau to conduct regional (South Pacific) work on violence against women, including training women in the region who work against violence.

Ms. Ali began working in the anti-rape movement during a 3 1/2 year stay in England. She became a volunteer at the Fiji’s Women’s Crisis Centre in 1985 and its coordinator in 1986. Also in 1986, she helped found the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement to lobby for law reform.

ANA CARCEDO, COSTA RICA/SPAIN
CEFEMINA

CEFEMINA is a non-profit women’s organization working in five main areas: violence against women, women’s health, women and the legal system, housing, and environmental issues. CEFEMINA was created in 1975. In 1984, it began to address issues of violence to help women break from dependency in violent relationships. They started self-help groups and community housing projects which are safer for women and involve women in their design and implementation.

Ms. Carcedo was born in Spain, but moved to Costa Rica many years ago. She has been an active feminist for 15 years, and is one of the founders of CEFEMINA. She has also been a university professor for 20 years.

GINA CEDAMANOS, PERU
Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristan, Women’s Legal Rights Program

Centro Flora Tristan is a feminist non-governmental organization which has played an important role in raising women’s issues in Peruvian society since its inception 12 years ago. Their objectives include developing gender consciousness and defending women’s rights throughout society. They also work to strengthen women leaders so they can develop local responses to violence as well as political proposals. The women’s rights project provides legal services to victims of domestic violence and rape, training workshops for women police officers, and workshops on legal rights and citizenship for women.

Ms. Cedamanos is a lawyer with the Centro Flora Tristan. She has been involved in political issues and women’s issues since she was a university student. She has participated in several feminist collectives in Peru, as well as different groups which support and defend human rights.
JANA CHRZOVA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA  
CS Helsinki Committee for Human Rights

CSHC is a non-governmental organization based on the Helsinki human rights watch process. Their work is wide-ranging, focusing on minorities, national problems and rehabilitation, along with drafting new laws that focus on human rights and social problems. Since democratization, the work of CSHC has begun to change, and currently there are some efforts to look at women's issues.

Ms. Chrzova has been involved in human rights and democracy organizing in Czechoslovakia for over ten years. In November 1990, she helped establish the CSHC as an official registered organization, and served as its Executive Secretary for most of 1990. She is currently studying at the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University, Prague.

ROBERTA CLARKE, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO  
CAFRA (Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action), Women and the Law Project

CAFRA was founded in 1985 to meet the communication, information, research and solidarity needs of women's activists and organizations in the Spanish, English, Dutch and French-speaking Caribbean. They carry out regional action/research programs which are developed collectively, on issues of concern to the regional women's movement. The Women and the Law Project has several components, including the production and dissemination of popular education materials on legal issues affecting women; the development of training programs for organizations whose work brings them into contact with women who have legal problems; and holding national consultations in the participating territories.

Ms. Clarke coordinates the Women and the Law Project for CAFRA. As both an academic and activist, one of her major concerns is in the field of advocacy and the role of women's organizations in mobilizing women for empowerment. She has been with CAFRA since 1989, and in this capacity is responsible for the establishment of a legal aid services clinic for women.

SIMONE GRILLO DINIZ, BRAZIL  
Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade Saude (CFSS) and Coordenadoria Especial da Mulher/Sao Paulo (CEM)

The CFSS is a feminist group of women's health activists that provides health attention and training for women and professionals. They prepare non-medical women to be health practitioners from a feminist view, provide individual and group health care in the areas of self-help, contraception, abortion, pregnancy, childbirth, and mental health. They are particularly concerned with the perception of women's health as unnatural and the violence of the illegality of abortion. CEM is the municipal governmental agency focusing on women's advancement and empowerment. They are working toward the creation of a City Council for Human Rights and Citizenship to make a “front” against all forms of violence and discrimination. They are also examining the impact of institutional violence on women's and children's mortality, the recognition of these deaths as violence, and the provision of information and support for action against such violent deaths.

Ms. Diniz has been involved with the CFSS since 1985, when she moved to Sao Paulo after finishing medical school. Since then, she has been involved in promoting a non-medical approach to women's health, through training, education, research and in health care provision. She is currently working on a Master's degree in Public Health.

WOO-SEOUP HAN, SOUTH KOREA  
Women's Hotline

The Women's Hotline, founded in 1983, seeks to help abused women by encouraging them to talk about their experiences and find solutions. WH
attempts to arouse public opinion against violence in the family and sexual assault, and argues that violence in any form should be eradicated. Their main activities include: counseling for victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment and discrimination; providing a shelter for battered women; public education; and coalition work with other women’s and social movement organizations. Since 1985, they have been focusing on overall problems of sexual violence, including sexual torture by the police, sexual violence in high schools, rape, domestic violence, and violence against prostitutes. Their understanding of the connection between sexual violence and political oppression compelled them to link with the democratization movement.

Ms. Han has been active in social movements since she was an undergraduate. Her involvement in the student movement made her aware of the deep rootedness of sex discrimination. She is a founding member of the Women’s Hotline.

LORI HEISE, UNITED STATES
Violence, Health and Development Project

The Violence Health and Development Project is a research and advocacy initiative—now housed at the Center for Women’s Global Leadership—designed to put gender violence, such as rape, battery and genital mutilation, onto the international health and development agendas. In so doing, the project seeks to stimulate study of this vital issue and increase funding available for women’s organizations fighting gender violence in the developing world.

Ms. Heise began working on international dimensions of violence against women four years ago, while at the Worldwatch Institute in Washington D.C. She has traveled widely in the Third World visiting anti-violence projects and programs related to women’s health. While working with a maternal and child health project in Guatemala, she helped organize a self-help support group for Mayan women living with abusive or alcoholic partners.

MAGALLY HUGGINS, VENEZUELA
AVESA (Venezuelan Association for an Alternative Sexual Education)

AVESA was founded in 1984. They have three programs: sexual education and consciousness-raising; sexual and reproductive health; and services for victims of sexual violence. Their first task was to raise consciousness about violence against women. Now they are conducting research into penal law related to child sexual abuse and teaching women’s mental health. They are also working to legalize abortion, which is now legal only when the life of the mother is endangered.

Ms. Huggins is a Social Psychologist and Criminologist. She has been politically active for many years — first in New Left organizations, and more recently in feminist organizations. She has been with AVESA since its beginnings, coordinating the program for victims of sexual violence, and more recently as a researcher and consultant. She was also AVESA’s representative in the non-governmental coordination of women’s organizations in Venezuela for many years.

HINA JILANI, PAKISTAN
AGHS Legal Aid Cell

AGHS Legal Aid Cell was founded twelve years ago to provide free legal service to disadvantaged sectors including prisoners, women and children. They also engage in advocacy and research on legal reform and documentation and monitoring of laws. They use the courts for widening and liberalizing their approach to human rights issues, especially women’s issues. They are involved in mobilizing on the issue of discriminatory laws emanating from the use/misuse of religion. One of their main concerns is that with the passing of Shariat law, pro-women laws are in jeopardy of being overturned.

Ms. Jilani helped found AGHS Legal Aid Cell in 1980. She has written and presented extensively on women and the law in Pakistan and on women’s, children’s and human rights. She is co-
EBON KRAM, SWEDEN

ROKS, Swedish Organization of Emergency Shelters for Battered Women

ROKS includes 116 shelters throughout Sweden. It is a political and religious independent non-profit organization to prevent abuse and oppression of women and to promote independence and equality of women throughout society. They also support the creation of new laws concerning the life and health of women. The organization finds that it must dispel the myths of Sweden as a utopia, since one woman is killed every week by her partner, and 1/3 of all violence cases reported to the police are domestic assaults and last year 24,000 women sought help from shelters and domestic violence projects. They offer technical assistance to the Swedish shelters, lobby politicians, and provide training to the police. They are currently working to outlaw pornography.

Ms. Kram has been with ROKS since 1985. In 1981 she helped found a shelter in Sundsvall, where she was living at the time. Her current position of chairwoman involves lecturing to local shelters, and to people working in the social welfare system, as well as the police and other officials. She organized an international conference on pornography in 1990.

LATA P.M., INDIA

Bombay Women's Centre

The Women’s Centre serves as a resource for women, providing legal help, counselling, support and consciousness-raising. They organize workshops, camps, protests and have been active in campaigns involving domestic violence, family laws, sex determination, communalism and sexual harassment. They use media like poems, songs, street plays, posters, etc. which encourage collective creativity in their popular education work. They see the struggle against violence as a struggle for basic human rights of women. In 1985, they hosted an international congress on women’s issues and launched a campaign against injectable contraceptives and amniocentesis for sex selection.

Lata P.M. has been active in political organizing since finishing college, when she joined the students’ and youth movement, and worked in slums and colleges, focusing on women’s issues. After 1982, she became more involved in autonomous feminist groups in Bombay and adopted the name which includes her mother’s name in place of the caste-indicating surname.

PAT MAHMOUD, NIGERIA

Women in Nigeria (WIN)

Women in Nigeria works towards the elimination of discrimination against women and the creation of an environment where women will participate equally with men in national development. They grapple with the problems of underdevelopment as well as the struggle for the improvement of the status of women. Although the law in Nigeria recognizes the equality of women, it does not exist in practice. WIN formed, as a result, in 1982, and currently has nine branches. Their concerns include clitoridectomy, child marriages, rape and family violence, and bridging the rural/urban divide. WIN works in cooperation with the National Council of Women’s Societies and the National Commission on Women. One of the major issues they face is the lack of dissemination of information about women’s rights. For instance, although the legal minimum age of marriage is now 18, many people don’t know the law exists and child marriage is still widespread.

Ms. Mahmoud has been involved with organizing around women’s issues since 1980. From 1985 to 1989 she was the state coordinator of Women in Nigeria. She is also a lawyer, working
for the Kano State Ministry of Justice as Acting Director and Head of the Legal Drafting Department.

RANAN NASHASHIBI,
PALESTINE/JERUSALEM
Union of Palestinian Working Women's Committee

The Union is a broad-based democratic grassroots women's organization which aims to improve the status of women within Palestinian society, working at different levels of women's oppression—political, economic and social. The Union was established in 1981 and currently has 63 branches in towns, villages and refugee camps. The organization attempts to deal with the overwhelming presence of violence which in addition to sexual violence includes the imprisonment of women and youth, street violence, and sexual harassment. For a long time, there was a sense that women's issues had to be subordinated to the national struggle. However, more recently there is more acceptance of feminism, which has grown in opposition to the rise of fundamentalism.

Ms. Nashashibi has been involved with the Union since 1982, and is currently a member of its Executive Committee. She also directs a community counseling center in Jerusalem, where she counsels children and couples.

MONICA O'CONNOR, IRELAND
Women's Aid

Women's Aid is an organization which provides support and shelter for women and children who are being physically, emotionally or sexually abused. The struggle to gain visibility for violence against women is made more difficult by the constraining forces of strong church/state links and a conservatism which is evident in the lack of contraceptive-abortion rights and information available to women in Ireland. This lack of choice, which includes a lack of economic choice, has meant that obvious links exist between women who experience violence and women in poverty. Women's Aid must continually face huge opposition which ranges from a lack of funding, to bureaucratic and legal obstacles.

Ms. O'Connor has been active in the women's movement for ten years and with Women's Aid for four years. She has extensive experience working with low-income and unemployed women, in disarmament work and in adult/community education. She is currently developing a program of Safe Housing for women and is helping to organize the first National Conference on Domestic Violence in Ireland.

ANNETTE PYPOPS, CANADA/BELGIUM
MATCH International Centre, Violence Against Women Program

MATCH International Centre is a feminist non-governmental organization which funds women and development projects internationally. Their programming is based on a feminist vision of development that challenges existing social, political and economic systems. MATCH supports women who are organizing both to change the practices and attitudes which discriminate against them and to meet women's needs largely ignored by society. They are active both in Canada and abroad, sharing resources and knowledge internationally. Their three program areas are: violence against women; gender and development; and words of women. Activities of the violence against women program includes support of overseas projects, popular theatre workshop tours in Canada and the production of a popular education kit on violence against women globally.

Ms. Pypops has been involved in the women's movement for 10 years at the local and provincial levels. Her focus has increasingly become violence against women. In 1988 she helped create the francophone committee at MATCH. Since the summer of 1990, she has been the director of their violence against women program.
QIYAMAH A. RAHMAN, UNITED STATES
International Newsletter Against Violence Against Women and Department of Human Resources/ Division of Family and Children Services, Atlanta

The Department of Human Resources/ Division of Family and Children Services administers all state and federal funding of Georgia’s allocations to battered women’s shelters. The International Newsletter Against Violence Against Women was founded by Ginny NiCarthy in 1985, following the UN Decade on Women Conference in Nairobi, to serve as a network and newsletter for the international violence against women movement.

Ms. Rahman has been formally involved in organizing around women’s issues since 1985. As a woman of color, she is particularly interested in violence against women and how it impacts on women of color nationally and internationally. She is also involved in the National Black Women’s Health Project where she serves as local self-help developer and facilitator, and in the Southeastern Regional Women of Color Task Force, which she helped found to connect women of color in the Southeast who are activists in the Battered Women’s Movement.

NILDA RIMONTE, UNITED STATES/PHILIPPINES
Center for the Pacific-Asian Family, Inc.

CPAF is a private, multi-ethnic, non-profit woman-focused agency, founded in 1978. Its four programs (sexual assault, domestic violence shelter, child abuse and women entrepreneurs) are all designed to help women and their children recover from their victimization through violence. It houses the first rape hotline and the first domestic violence shelter in the US for Pacific-Asian victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Ms. Rimonte is the founder and director of CPAF. In addition to defining its mission, she was also responsible for the day-to-day management of the agency and client counseling. She continues to counsel victims of rape and domestic violence who are uncomfortable speaking anything but Tagalog/Filipino.

SYARIFAH SABAROEDIN, INDONESIA
Kalyanamitra Foundation

Kalyanamitra Foundation is a women’s communication and information center working to address women’s problems. They collect and disseminate information to women, NGOs, policymakers, academics and professionals, with the goal of mobilizing for social change. Since 1987, one of their main concerns has been rape. They plan to open a Rape Crisis Center as a model project in Jakarta.

Ms. Sabaroedin teaches sociology of prison, sociology of deviant behavior and women and crime at the State University of Indonesia. She has been involved in feminist organizing since 1985. She is one of the founders of Kalyanamitra Foundation. As an activist and researcher, she works primarily on issues of sexuality (rape, domestic violence, trafficking in women and lesbianism) in relation to feminist theory and politics.

FELICIA SAKALA, ZAMBIA
YWCA/Zambia, Centre for Women in Need

The YWCA in Zambia plays an important role in promoting positive social change from a woman’s perspective. In November 1990, they established a drop-in center as part of their Centre for Women in Need. The drop-in center staff provides counseling on health and legal issues to women in Lusaka. The Centre also has a resource library, and serves as a meeting place and community center.

Ms. Sakala has been with the YWCA since June 1989. She is trained as a nurse, and worked for many years as a public health nurse in the Ministry of Health, but left because of their inattention to violence against women and to the needs of women in crisis. She is currently the
coordinator of primary health care programs at the national level for the YWCA. Her concern for women’s mental and physical health led to the opening of the drop-in center. In March 1991 she helped organize the first national forum on violence against women in Zambia.

MARBHA SFEIR, CANADA/UNITED STATES
Education Wife Assault, Public Education Program and “Mujeres de Chile y Canada trabajando juntas; No mas violencia contra la mujer” project.

Since its establishment in 1978, Education Wife Assault has had as its mandate the prevention of wife assault/woman abuse through education. Their primary constituencies are the multiracial/multicultural community of metro Toronto and the secondary school system. In immigrant communities, they use print materials, workshops, skillsharing programs, consultations and support, to enable women to design programs in their own language and out of their particular cultural context (they have developed pamphlets in 10 languages). In the schools, they provide professional development workshops to enable teachers and school personnel to respond to children witnessing violence against their mothers and/or experiencing it themselves.

Ms. Sfeir is part of a core staff of three at Education Wife Assault. She has been working against men’s violence toward women in intimate relationships for 5 years locally and internationally. Her work on racism, militarism, human rights and women’s issues spans 25 years in Canada, the U.S., the Middle East, and Latin America.

SIRIPORN SKROBANEK, THAILAND
Foundation for Women

Foundation for Women (FEW) was set up in 1984 under the name of Women’s Information Centre (WIC). They provide shelter for battered women, develop teaching modules for women in different sectors, organize seminars/trainings for women, and run campaigns against forced and child prostitution. They work to make explicit the links between militarism, tourism and violence against women, particularly in the form of traffic in women, sex tourism and forced prostitution. They are currently engaged in a new project entitled “Weaving a New Life,” to develop a teaching curriculum for paraprofessionals about counseling victims of violence and sexual assault.

Ms. Skrobanek was one of the founders of WIC in 1984, and served as its first coordinator, as well as coordinator of its Home for Battered Women in 1985. She has been the Secretary-General of the Foundation for Women since 1987. She has worked extensively on the issue of forced and child prostitution, domestic violence and women’s development issues in Thailand for over a decade.

EVERJOICE WIN, ZIMBABWE
Women’s Action Group, Speakout/Taurai/Khulumani

WAG began in 1983 as a voluntary organization addressing women’s legal and health issues, and opened their office in 1987 as a full-time, staff organization. Speakout/Taurai/Khulumani is a publication of the Women’s Action Group. It focuses on women’s legal and health issues. They seek to raise awareness among grassroots women in Zimbabwe, and currently publish the magazine in three languages.

Ms. Win has worked with WAG for almost three years, and has been editing Speakout/Taurai/Khulumani for a year. In addition to handling the production of the magazine, she does the public relations work, including speaking at workshops, conferences, and radio and television programs. She has also edited a pamphlet on Women and AIDS, published by the Ministry of Health, and pamphlets on legal rights, published by the Legal Resources Foundation. She serves on the Advisory Committee of WILDAF—Women in Law and Development Africa network.
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shamima Ali</td>
<td>Women's Crisis Center 73 Gordon St. P.O. Box 12882 Suva FIJI ISLANDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ana Carcedo</td>
<td>CEFEMINA Apartado 5355 San Jose 1000 COSTA RICA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gina Cedamanos</td>
<td>Centro de La Mujer Peruana Flora Tristan Pque. Hernan Velarde 42 Lima PERU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jana Chrzova</td>
<td>CS Helsinki Committee /IHJ IR/ Cs. helsinki vybor 119 00 Praha 012-Hrad CSFR CZECHOSLOVAKIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roberta Clarke</td>
<td>Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action P.O. Box 42, Tunapuna Post Office TRINIDAD &amp; TOBAGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simone Grilo Diniz</td>
<td>Coordenadorio Especial da Mulher Pav. Pe. Manoel de Nobrega, sala 13-terreo Cep-0498, Parque Ibirapuera, Sao Paolo- S.P. BRAZIL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woo-Seoup Han</td>
<td>Women's Hotline 502-7 Chang Chung-Dong Sedaemun-Gu Seoul 120-180 KOREA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lori Heise</td>
<td>Violence and Health Development, and Project 27 Clifton Avenue Douglass College, Rutgers University New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903-0270 USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magally Huggins</td>
<td>AVESA Avenida Francisco Miranda Edific. Hollywood 3 #88 Chacao Caracas 1060 VENEZUELA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hina Jilani</td>
<td>AGHS Legal Aid Cell 131 E1 Gulberg III Lahore PAKISTAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekon Kram</td>
<td>ROKS Box 22114 Hantverkargatan 7 104 22 Stockholm SWEDEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pat Mahmoud</td>
<td>WIN Ministry of Justice P.M.B. 3040 Gidan Murtala Kano NIGERIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rana Nashashibi</td>
<td>Union of Palestinian Working Women Committees 7 Ibn Abi Taleb St. P.O. Box 25113 East Jerusalem VIA ISRAEL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monica O'Connor</td>
<td>Women's Aid 17 A Sallymount Avenue Ranelagh Dublin 6 IRELAND</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lata P. M.</td>
<td>Women's Centre 104 B Sunrise Apartments Nehru Road Vakola, Santa Cruz (E) Bombay 400 055 INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annette Pyrops</td>
<td>MATCH International Centre 1102-200 Elgin Street Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1L5 CANADA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qiyamah A. Rahman</td>
<td>International News Letter Against Violence Against Women 38 Meadowood Terrace Lithonia, Georgia 30358 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilda Rimonte</td>
<td>Center for Pacific-Asian Families 543 North Fairfax #108 Los Angeles, California, 90036 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syarifah Sabaroeedin</td>
<td>Kalyanamitra Foundation Jl. Sebret 10 A, Pasar Minggu INDONESIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Felicia Sakala</td>
<td>YWCA Crisis Center P.O. Box 50115 Lusaka ZAMBIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marsha Sfeir</td>
<td>Education Wife Assault 427 Bloor St. W. Toronto, Ontario M5s 1x7 CANADA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siniporn Skrohanek</td>
<td>Foundation for Women P.O. Box 7-47 35/267 Charansanitwongse 62 Bangkok 10700 THAILAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everjoice Win</td>
<td>Women's Action Group P.O. Box 135 Harare ZIMBABWE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
STAFF AND RESOURCE PERSONS AND
INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

GLOBAL CENTER
STAFF AND
SUPPORT TEAM

Charlotte Bunch, Director
Roxanna Carrillo, Institute Coordinator
Susana Fried, Program Associate
Diana Gerace, Secretary
Niamh Reilly, Program Associate
Susan Roche, Institute Associate

Student Interns:
Lisa Coxson
Stephanie Lentini

Other Supporters:
Rosa Briceno
Kathleen Casey
Lauren McIntyre

Global Center Rutgers
Policy Committee:
Lourdes Bueno, Anthropology PhD. Candidate
Abena Busia, English and Africana Studies, Professor
Mary Hartman, Douglass College, Dean
Ruth Mandel, Center for the American Woman and Politics, Director
Joanna Regulskra, Local Democracy in Poland Project, Director
Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, N\J Hispanic Women's Leadership, Director
Heisoo Shin, Sociology PhD. Candidate

Contact all of the above at the Center, except as noted below:
Center for Women's Global Leadership
27 Clifton Avenue
Douglass College Box 270
New Brunswick, NJ 08903-0270
USA
(908) 932-8782
Fax: (908) 932-1180

Lourdes Bueno
Apartado 156-9
Santo Domingo
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Susan Roche
451 Waterman
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT 05401 USA

Roxanna Carrillo
UNIFEM
304 East 45th St., 6th fl.
New York, NY 10017 USA

Heisoo Shin
Kukje Apt. 1-302
612 Daechi-dong,
Kangnam-Ku
Seoul 135-281
KOREA

RESOURCE PEOPLE

Sarada Balagopalan
Decade for Human Rights Education Inc.
526 West 111th St., Suite 3B
New York, NY 10025
USA

Karla Jackson-Brewer
229 East 4th Street, #1
New York, NY 10009
USA

Jackie Campbell
3777 Greenook Boulevard
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
USA

Kathleen Casey
Political Science Department
Rutgers University
Hickman Hall, 5th floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08903
USA

Liz Coit
NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund
99 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10013
USA

Rhonda Copelon & Celina Romany
CUNY Law School
65-21 Main Street
Flushing, NY 11367
USA
Staff

Mallika Dutt
Sakhi for South Asian Women
P.O. Box 1428
Cathedral Station
New York, NY 10025
USA

Annie Ellman & Brenda Jones
Center for Anti-Violence Education/
Brooklyn Women's Martial Arts
421 5th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11215
USA

Roberta Francis
Director, New Jersey Division on Women
Department of Community Affairs
101 S. Broad Street, CN-801
Trenton, NJ 08625-0801
USA

Govind Kelkar
Asian Institute of Technology
Women in Development
Human Settlements Development Division
P.O. Box 2754
Bangkok
THAILAND

Beth Richie
540 Ft. Washington Avenue, Apt. 4B
New York, NY 10033
USA

Suzanne Roach
Amnesty International/USA
322 8th Avenue
New York, NY 10001
USA

Joanne Sandler
43 East 20th St., #3
New York, NY 10003
USA

Marge Schuler
Women, Law and Development
3900 Connecticut Avenue, NW, #503F
Washington, DC 20008
USA

Elsa Stamatopoulou
UN Center for Human Rights
United Nations Rm. S-3660C,
New York, NY 10017
USA

Donna Sullivan
International League for Human Rights
432 Park Avenue South, Rm. 1103
New York, NY 10016
USA

Dorothy Thomas
Women's Rights Project/Human Rights Watch
1522 K Street, NW, Suite 910
Washington, DC 20005
USA

Sima Walti
Refugee Women in Development
810 First Street, NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002
USA

Shamila Sen
Manavi
P.O. Box 614
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
USA

Leslie Wolfe
Center for Women's Policy Studies
2000 P Street, NW, Suite 508
Washington, DC 20036
USA
INTERNSATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mariclaire Acosta, Mexico
Director of Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights

Fatma Alloo, Tanzania
Tanzania Media Women’s Association

Peggy Antrobus, Barbados
Coordinator of DAWN

Georgina Ashworth, UK
Founding Director of CHANGE

Elise Boulding, US
President of the International Peace Research Council

Jane Cottingham, UK/Switzerland
Founder of ISIS, (Women’s International Information and Communication Services)

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Director of the Center for Law and Development

Rudo Gaidzanwa, Zimbabwe
Sociologist, University of Zimbabwe

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Founder and coordinator of Women Living Under Muslim Laws International Solidarity Network

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Fiji Women’s Rights Movement

Kumari Jayawardena, Sri Lanka
Pacific Asian Women’s Forum (PAWF)

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Founder of Greenham Common

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District Judge, Uganda Association of Women Lawyers

Stephen Marks, US
Lawyer and Human Rights Educator

Yayori Matsui, Japan
Journalist with ASAHI SHIMBUN

Christine Ouellette, Canada
Director of MATCH International Centre

Vibhuti Patel, India
SNDT University, Women’s Studies

Jacqueline Pitanguy, Brazil
Former President of National Council of Women’s Rights

Suzanne Roach, US
Amnesty International USA
Women’s Task Force

Teresa Rodriguez, Chile
ISIS Internacional and Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM)

Hannah Njoki Tiagha, Ethiopia/Cameroon
UN Economic Commission on Africa

Virginia Vargas, Peru
Founding Director of Flora Tristan Women’s Center

Participants and staff
APPENDIX C

STATISTICS ON GENDER VIOLENCE GLOBALLY

I. INCIDENCE OF GENDER VIOLENCE

• According to former Surgeon General Koop, 3 to 4 million women in the United States are beaten by their partners each year. As many as 15 million women have been abused at some time during their lives.¹

• Battering is the greatest single cause of injury among U.S. women, accounting for more emergency room visits than auto accidents, muggings, and rape combined.²

• In Papua New Guinea, 67 percent of rural women and 56 percent of urban women have been victims of wife abuse, according to a national survey conducted by the PNG Law Reform Commission.³

• Every minute and a half a woman is raped in South Africa, totaling approximately 386,000 women raped each year.⁴

• In Bangladesh, assassination of wives by husbands accounts for 50 percent of all murders.⁵

• In a detailed family planning survey of 733 women in the Kissi district of Kenya, 42 percent said they were beaten regularly by their husbands.⁶

• An island-wide random sample of women in Barbados revealed that nearly 1 in 3 have been sexually abused during childhood or adolescence. Thirty percent have been battered as adults with 1 in 17 reporting severe, continuous abuse. A generation ago, 1 in 2 women were subject to at least moderate battering, with 1 in 6 suffering intense, continuous abuse.⁷

• In India, there have been 11,259 dowry-related murders in the last three years, according to official government statistics. This is widely regarded as a low estimate.⁸

• A survey done in Santiago, Chile indicates that 80 percent of women have suffered physical, emotional or sexual abuse by a male partner or relative; 63 percent report that they are currently being abused.⁹
A detailed, country-wide survey in Colombia reveals that one in three women have been emotionally or verbally abused by their partner, one in five have been physically abused, and one and ten have been raped by a partner.¹⁰

Twenty-two to 35 percent of women who visit emergency departments in the United States are there for symptoms related to ongoing abuse.¹¹

In the United States, 9 out of 10 women murdered are murdered by men, half at the hands of a male partner.¹²

In a random sample of Norwegian gynecological patients, 25 percent of women who had ever lived with a male partner had been physically and/or sexually abused by him.¹³

In Canada, a government commission estimated that 1 in 4 female children and 1 in 10 male children will be sexually assaulted prior to the age of 17 years.¹⁴

A study, using children as informants, reported that 57 percent of wives in San Salvador were beaten by their husbands.¹⁵

According to the World Health Organization more than 80 million women have undergone sexual surgery ("female circumcision") in Africa alone.¹⁶

In the Maternity Hospital of Lima, Peru 90 percent of young mothers aged 12 to 16 have been raped by their father, stepfather, or a close relative.¹⁷

In Costa Rica, an organization that works with young mothers likewise reports that 95 percent of pregnant clients under age 16 are victims of incest.¹⁸

In a study of 1,388 women seeking services (not related to violence) at Costa Rica's national child welfare agency, one in two report being physically abused.¹⁹

The U.N. High Commission on Refugees' data on violence against Vietnamese boat people indicates that 39 percent of women are abducted and/or raped while at sea. These statistics likely underestimate the problem given women's reluctance to admit violation and the difficulty of documenting abductions.²⁰

In one study of an Indian village more than 75 percent of men from scheduled classes admitted to beating their wives.²¹

A 1990 study of 1,000 women in the region of Sacatepequez, Guatemala found that 49 percent have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused, 74 percent by an intimate male partner.²²

II. HEALTH EFFECTS OF GENDER VIOLENCE

Discrimination against girl children is so strong in the Punjab state of India that girl children aged 2 to 4 die at twice the rate of boys.²³

Among 45 developing countries for which recent data are available, there are only two where mortality rates for girls ages 1-4 are not higher than that of boys.²⁴

One out of every three women who come to hospital emergency rooms in Peru are victims of domestic violence.²⁵

A statistical survey conducted in Netzahualcoyotl, a city adjacent to Mexico City, found that one in three women had been victims of family violence; twenty percent reported blows to the stomach during pregnancy.²⁶

A recent survey by the Inter-Africa Committee estimates that half of Kenya's maternal mortality rate of 170 per 100,000 live births is due to circumcision and/or other harmful traditional practices.²⁷

In Shanghai, domestic violence is the cause of about six percent of serious injuries and death.²⁸

Battered Women are 4 to 5 times more likely than non-battered women to require psychiatric treatment.²⁹
Seventeen percent of urban wives surveyed in Papua New Guinea needed hospital treatment for injuries inflicted by their husbands. In PNG where many women have enlarged spleens due to malaria, a single blow can kill them.30

One study of amniocentesis in a large Bombay hospital found that 95.5 percent of female fetuses were aborted.31

In one study of 33 infibulated Somali women, all had to have extensive episiotomies (cutting) during childbirth, and their second stage labor was five times longer than normal; five of their babies died, and 21 suffered oxygen deprivation due to the long and obstructed labor.32

In Matlabthana, Bangladesh, 6 percent of all maternal deaths are due to homicide and suicide motivated by male censure of female behavior or shame related to rape or premarital intercourse. Violent deaths rise to 22 percent of maternal deaths if one includes botched abortions, many motivated by shame of pre-marital pregnancy.33

A study of rape in rural and urban areas of Bangladesh from 1983-1985 reports that 84 percent of victims suffered severe injuries and/or unconsciousness, mental illness or death following the rape incident.34

Forty-five percent of all female alcoholics have a history of battering that preceded their addiction.35

Forty-five percent of mothers of abused children are themselves battered. In most of these instances, the father is abusing both the women and the child and the battering precedes the child abuse.36

This fact sheet was compiled by Lori Heise, Violence, Health and Development Project, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University. (908) 932-1414.

ENDNOTES


17. This figure is quoted in “Rape, Can I have this Child?” a photonovela produced by Movimento Mahuela Ramos, Lima, Peru, as part of their campaign to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape.


29. C. Everett Koop, op. cit.

30. Christine Bradley, op. cit.


35. Handbook of Family Violence. op. cit.

36. Rosenberg, et. al., op. cit.
APPENDIX D

PETITION TO THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

PLEASE SIGN, COPY AND CIRCULATE ATTACHED PETITION AND RETURN FORMS TO:

Center for Women’s Global Leadership, 27 Clifton Avenue, Douglass College, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, USA. FAX: (908) 932-1180, or
International Women’s Tribune Centre, 777 UN Plaza, NY, NY 10017, USA. FAX: (212) 661-2704.

The second round of petitions with signatures will be delivered to the UN prior to the September 1992 meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 1993 Conference. Petitions received after this time will also be forwarded to the UN.

SPONSORING GROUPS INCLUDE: Center for Women’s Global Leadership; International Women’s Tribune Centre; World YWCA; ISIS International (Manila) ISIS Internacional (Santiago); ISIS-WICCE; International Women’s Rights Action Watch; Match International Centre; International Women’s Health Coalition; Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development; Women in Law and Development in Africa; Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project; CLADEM (Comité Latinoamericano para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer); ILSA Associacion Interamericana de Servicios Legales; Women’s International Democratic Federation; Institute for Women, Law and Development; International Abolitionist Federation; WIDE (Women in Development Europe); International Council of Women; International Council of Jewish Women; World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession; World Federation of Methodist Women; International Federation of University Women; International Association of Women in Radio and Television; Organizing Committee for the Decade of Human Rights Education; African Participatory Research Network; Association of African Women for Research and Development; Zonta International; Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom; Pan Pacific and South East Asian Women’s Association; European Union of Women; Soroptimists International; Third World Movement Against Exploitation of Women; WREE (Women for Racial and Economic Equality); Baha’i International; Worldview International Foundation; Mujer/Fempress; DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era).

NATIONAL LEVEL GROUPS: Women’s Action Group, Zimbabwe; The Black Sash, South Africa; Norwegian Housewives Association; Women’s Research and Education Centre and Mor Cat, Turkey; Women’s Centre, Bombay, India; Philippine Nurses Association of America; CIDEM, Bolivia; Comision de Estudios de la Mujer, Nicaragua; Association for the Advancement of Feminism, Hong Kong; Catholics for a Free Choice, USA; Casa de la Mujer, Colombia; National Organization of Women, Taiwan; Gabriela, Philippines; Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwering, and HOM Netherlands; Church Women United, Aotearoa/New Zealand; OASIS, Mexico; KMK, Negros Philippines; Arab Women’s Solidarity Association, Egypt; Women’s Legal Bureau Inc., and Alternative Legal Assistance Center, Philippines; Centro de la Mujer de Moquegua and Centro Flora Tristan, Peru; South Africa Council of Churches; NGO Coordinating Committee of Zambia; Tanzania Media Women’s Association; Geneva Forum for Philippine Concerns; Centro de Estudios de la Mujer, Argentina; National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Canada; Sabah Women Action-Resource Group, Malaysia.
“VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHTS”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects everyone “without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language...or other status” (art. 2). Furthermore, “everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person” (art. 3) and “no one shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (art. 5). Therefore, we, the undersigned call upon the 1993 United Nations World Conference on Human Rights to comprehensively address women’s human rights at every level of its proceedings. We demand that gender violence, a universal phenomenon which takes many forms across culture, race and class, be recognized as a violation of human rights requiring immediate action.

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Center for Women's Global Leadership
Douglass College, Rutgers University
27 Clifton Avenue
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903
Telephone: 908-932-8782
Fax: 908-932-1180