



central america women's network
promoting women's rights and gender equality
www.cawn.org

November 2008
ELECTRONIC BULLETIN



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1. CAWN NEWS

• WIDE Conference

Between 8th and 12th October, CAWN attended the WIDE (Women In Development Europe) Annual Conference 2008, at the Peace Palace in the Hague, Netherlands. The conference 'Feminist Visions for a Just Europe' looked at how our feminism is situated, links throughout Europe and the globe and making alliances. The current financial crisis facing many countries at the moment also precipitated some interesting discussions on feminism alternatives to the financial system.

CAWN very much enjoyed the opportunity to meet and share ideas with other women's organisations, however reflects upon the need for more representation of the voices of Central American women in Europe.

• New Website

CAWN invites you to visit our new design website at www.cawn.org. All of CAWN's latest publications can be found online and available to download, as well as other information and

updates on our work promoting women's rights in Central America.

• Introductions

CAWN would like to welcome our new board members (Samira Yussuf & Frances Carlisle) and interns (Allison Pollock, Cat Gallantine & Katie Wicks) to the team. We look forward to working together in the pursuit of CAWN's objectives.

• AWID International Forum

CAWN attended the 11th Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) International Forum on Women's Rights and Development in Cape Town, South Africa between the 14th and 17th November. CAWN joined women's rights activists from around the world to debate and strategise about how to build stronger movements to advance women's rights and gender equality globally.

2. CAWN CAMPAIGNS

• Nicaragua

The recent accusations and actions of the Nicaraguan government against civil society organisations and in particular women's organisations that have been working for many years for the defence and respect of human rights, women's rights and democracy in Nicaragua, has prompted CAWN to take action to express our serious concern and show solidarity towards these organisations.

On Friday 10th October, National Police in Nicaragua broke down the doors of the offices of two rights organisations and seized documents and computers, and a further 15 civil society organisations were put under investigation. This follows the recent launch of Operation No More Lies in which the Government alleged that NGOs and local women's organisations working for the promotion of gender equality, human rights and poverty reduction were "modern-day Trojan horses" and a rightwing plot to destabilise the administration.

These events have put the integrity and security of the members of several civil society organisations and in particular the lives of women's leaders at risk, and may lead to silencing opposition voices. We feel that the hostility of the Nicaraguan government goes beyond legitimate political opposition and constitutes resistance to peaceful attempts by its opposition groups to secure improved conditions and exert their rights as equal citizens.

In response to the deteriorating democratic environment in Nicaragua, CAWN expressed its concerns directly to the Nicaraguan President, Sr. Daniel Ortega Saavedra, in a letter sent to the President and other Nicaraguan Government officials. In the UK, a joint letter was drafted by CAWN and sent to Rt. Hon. David Milliband MP (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs) as well as other Parliamentary officials, from members of the Latin American and Caribbean group of BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development) calling for the UK Government to take action. CAWN has sent letters of solidarity to Nicaraguan organisations that have been affected by recent events, offering our continued support towards promotion and protection of women's rights in the region and are maintaining an open dialogue with these organisations. Further information and copies of all the letters can be found on the CAWN website (www.cawn.org).

3. CAWN PUBLICATIONS

CAWN publications are available to download from our website. For a hard copy, please email info@cawn.org with your full contact details. Please feel free to distribute our research amongst your contacts, networks, and beneficiaries.

• **The Response of International Aid Agencies to Violence against Women in Central America – the case of Honduras** **November 2008**

CAWN announces its latest research on *The Responses of International Aid Agencies to Violence against Women in Central America – the case of Honduras*. This publication identifies seven different approaches that international aid agencies have adopted in response to tackling violence against women (VAW). The influence of the MDGs and the Paris Declaration on the international aid agenda makes funding VAW work more complex and raises obstacles to its inclusion as a priority in any national development strategy, making it difficult to hold governments accountable for tackling it. Although the MDGs promote rights-based approaches and have gender equality as their third goal, VAW is not directly addressed and therefore seems to get lost in formal development frameworks, instruments, indicators and reporting mechanisms. Three important conclusions are raised as a result of this research: a) the multiplication of successful programmes by government institutions, NGOs and women's organisations, b) the question of sustainability and long term programmes by aid agencies, and c) using a multi-sectorial approach to tackle VAW.

To view the report, see:

<http://www.cawn.org/html/The%20Response%20of%20International%20Aid%20Agencies%20to%20VAW.pdf>

• **Economic Literacy - a tool for women's empowerment in Nicaragua** **October 2008**

CAWN and MEC (Movimiento de Mujeres Maria Elena Cuadra) worked together in a project funded by DFID Civil Society Challenge Fund (2005 – 2008) that involved capacity-building in micro and macro economic literacy for women. "Through an empowering understanding of economic and trade issues, women in Nicaragua have been enabled to promote and defend their

interests, push for gendered laws, influence corporate, national and local government policy and practice, and advocate to curb the negative effects of free trade agreements on women living in poverty in Central America.”

To view the briefing paper, see:

<http://www.cawn.org/assets/CAWN%20Economic%20Literacy.pdf>

4. CAWN EVENTS

• CAWN's Research Report Launch and Drinks Reception

Thursday 11th December 2008, 6pm

Venue to be announced.

CAWN will be officially launching its latest research report *The Responses of International Aid Agencies to Violence against Women in Central America – the case of Honduras*, as well as presenting recent updates of the programme in Honduras. All friends and supporters are welcome to attend to celebrate the launch with a drinks reception. Please check our website for further details.

• Speaker Tour

February/March 2009

Two representatives of our partner organisation CEM-H (Centro de Estudios de la Mujer – Honduras) will be meeting CAWN supporters, NGOs and other women's organisations to raise awareness of their campaigns and work with grassroots women. Please check the website for further information later in the year.

• AGM

March 2009

CAWN will be holding the AGM during the first week of March. During the meeting our partners from Honduras will be presenting and sharing their experiences of their work challenging violence against women in the region. Please check the website for further information later in the year.

5. CENTRAL AMERICA NEWS UPDATES

• Costa Rica: Court whittles domestic violence law in Costa Rica

Source: Tico Times (20th October 2008)

The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court (Sala IV) has rescinded Articles 22 and 25 of Costa Rica's Law to Penalise Violence

Against Women, ruling them unconstitutional, citing vagueness in the wording of both. More than 100 men were released from prison late Thursday following the court's decision. The much-contested articles 22 and 25 address criminalisation of “maltreatment” and “emotional violence”. The President of the National Institute for Women (INAMU), Jeanette Carrillo, called the court's ruling a “serious step backward”.

For full article see:

http://www.ticotimes.net/dailyarchive/2008_10/1020082.htm

See also in Spanish:

<http://www.prensalibre.co.cr/2008/octubre/17/nacionales01.php>

• Honduras: Flooding

Source: UN News Centre (7th November 2008)

At least 60 Hondurans have now died as a result of Tropical Storm Paloma, and the number of people affected by the flooding has risen this week to nearly 320,000. Paloma first struck the region as a tropical depression in mid-October, causing floods and destruction in neighbouring Guatemala as well. But in recent days Paloma has intensified into a bigger storm and struck different parts of the country with torrential rainfall. Honduras was the nation worst affected when the catastrophic Hurricane Mitch swept across Central America in late 1998, with an estimated 7,000 people killed and some \$3.8 billion in damage to infrastructure, agriculture and homes. The country's capacity to cope with natural disasters remains compromised, particularly since Honduras has been struck by at least 27 separate disasters in the decade since Mitch.

For full article see:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28854&Cr=Honduras&Cr1=>

• Latin America: Women's rights defenders seek protection

Source: Human Rights Watch (29th October 2008)

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is in a crucial position to bring overdue attention to the violations and abuses that women's human rights defenders face in Latin America, four rights organisations said after a historic hearing that raised these issues before the commission for the first time.

In addition to the recent violence in Nicaragua, women trade unionists and leaders of economic, social, and cultural rights movements in Colombia have been killed, assaulted, and threatened in the last few years. In its session on October 28, 2008, the commission heard

testimony from women's rights defenders in Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and the United States.

The human rights organisations called for immediate implementation and rigorous follow-up on the commission's recommendations in its 2006 report to improve the situation for women's rights defenders. They urged the commission to recognise that a broad range of women's rights defenders are at risk, and to continue to promote the protections that are necessary to ensure that all women's rights defenders can work freely, safely, and effectively.

For full article see:

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/10/29/america-s-women-s-rights-defenders-seek-protection>

• **Latin America: Latin America Awaits Obama Action**

Source: BBC Online (6th November 2008)

"No major changes or initiatives, but a change in tone" - is the commonly-held view of Washington analysts on Barack Obama's likely policies towards Latin America. The harsh reality for anyone dreaming of a major change in US-Latin American relations is that the president-elect will face other priorities: an economic recession in the US and two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. "These will be head and shoulders over other issues, including Latin America," says Daniel Erikson of the Inter-American Dialogue. "But there will be a major change in style towards the region - less didactic and more interested in building consensus and working through multilateral organisations."

Despite huge areas of common interest, such as drugs trafficking, trade and immigration, Latin America barely got a mention in the electoral campaign. Mr Obama has spoken in support of the current Plan Colombia and the US\$400m Plan Merida for combating drugs trafficking in Mexico and Central America.

In a recent survey of 18 countries in Latin America by Latinobarometro, 29% of those polled said it would make no difference whoever won the US elections. Another 31% said they did not know which candidate would suit Latin America better. This apparent indifference and ignorance, some analysts say, is a sign of how low US influence and prestige has sunk in the region.

For full article see:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/us_elections_2008/7710855.stm

6. OTHER PUBLICATIONS

• **Child and Early Marriage– New Report**

A new briefing paper from World Vision, *Before she's ready: Fifteen places girls marry by 15* illustrates the causes and human costs of early marriage in the countries and regions where it is most common. The prevalence of early marriage in Latin and Central American countries where World Vision works, as surveyed by the UN study, averaged 24 percent, and climbed to about 40 percent in some areas of Central America such as Nicaragua and Honduras. According to the report the consequences of early marriage include an increased risk of HIV and maternal death, an abrupt end to a girl's education and a greater chance of violence and abuse. The report points out that laws prohibiting child marriage exist in most countries but have done little to stop the practise, especially where it is linked to the genuine economic needs of struggling families. World Vision recommends job training, microfinance schemes and agricultural input programmes to remove the necessity of offering a daughter for marriage. To view the report, see:

[www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/early-marriage.pdf/\\$file/early-marriage.pdf](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/early-marriage.pdf/$file/early-marriage.pdf)

• **Progress of the World's Women – New Report**

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has launched the *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009* multimedia report. The report focuses on five key areas where the need to strengthen accountability to women is urgent: politics and governance; access to public services; economic opportunities; justice; and the distribution of international assistance for development and security.

To download the report, please visit

www.unifem.org

• **Gender Equality – Conceptual Framework**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has published *Políticas de Igualdad, Equidad y Gender Mainstreaming ¿De qué estamos hablando?: Marco Conceptual*. This research offers a clear and concise conceptual framework of public policies, equality policies and gender mainstreaming. It analyses the real progress that has been made in the region regarding public policy to promote equality between men and women. The paper begins with a synthesis of the historical evolution of

gender equality policies, analysing some of the fundamental concepts related to public policy and the main aspects of the conceptual and doctrinal discussion on equality. It provides a review and analysis of equality policies and clarifies some concepts on gender mainstreaming, its components and the use of this strategy in public policy.

To view the report in Spanish, see:

<http://generomexico.colmex.mx/textos/Politicasd eigualdad08-AmericaLatinaGenera.pdf>

7. UPCOMING EVENTS & CONFERENCES

• Latin America 2008

Saturday 6th December 2008, 9.30-5pm

Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1

CAWN will be presenting along with other NGO's, trade unionists, academics and progressive movements from Latin America and the UK to explore recent developments across the region. CAWN's latest research report will be presented at the workshop "Violence in Central America, challenging power relations and social structures" and we will also hold a stall at the event, distributing publications and general information.

Tickets £10/£6 unwaged

To book call 020 8800 0155 or book online at:

www.latinamerica2008.org.uk

• International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Tuesday 25th November 2008, 2.30-5.30pm

Bolivar Hall, 56 Grafton Way, London, W1T 5DL
Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) is holding its first Conference on Abuse against Latin American Women in the UK. To book call 020 7324 9802 or for further information see:

www.lawrs.org.uk/

• Beyond Violence, the Struggle against Gender and Gang Violence in Guatemala 8th – 26th November 2008

Various locations throughout the UK.

Guatemala Solidarity Network speaker tour by Iduvina Hernandez, a Guatemalan journalist and human rights defender working to challenge the extraordinary and horrific levels of violence and murder against women and young people in Guatemala.

For more information and location details see:

www.guatemalalolidarity.org.uk/

• Reclaim the Night

Saturday 22nd November 2008 6pm

Assemble Whitehall Place, finishing at the Friend's Meeting House, Euston Road
London Feminist Network women-only march against rape and male violence in all its forms, followed by a mixed rally for men, women and children with stalls and speakers.

For more information see:

www.reclaimthenight.org
