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## 1. CAWN news

### Women's Rights, Social Inclusion and the Media project

As we published in our last newsletter CAWN is currently working on a new development education project, funded by the European Commission, in partnership with Frauensolidaritaet, based in Austria, entitled "Women's Rights, Social Inclusion and the Media".

The three years project aims to increase public awareness about women's rights and development especially in relation to women's labour exploitation.

Our goal is to make the connections between these issues and poverty, gender discrimination and the portrayal of women in mainstream media.

Launched in October, our work to-date has included a speakers' tour, advocacy trainings and discussion forums. We have also begun to

set-up a network of young activists who will be able to put into practice the knowledge and experience



gained through all the project activities.

In April we will launch the project blog, <http://womensrightsandthedia.wordpress.com> with full campaign updates, resources and a forum to share ideas.

## 2. CAWN events

On 27<sup>th</sup> April, CAWN and our Austrian-based partner Frauensolidaritaet will host the project's first public event, **“Images of Exploited and Trafficked Women”**.

While there has been growing awareness over the last decade as to the urgency to address trafficking for sexual exploitation, advocates have not always agreed on the most appropriate approach to tackle it. Debates within policy-making forums are also played out and amplified by media stories, backing the prevalence of dominating discourses.

The conference intends to be a forum for the effectiveness of such approaches to be discussed and for their complementarities to be explored. It will bring together some of the most distinguished speakers from the policy, academic and NGO fields to examine current efforts to counteract trafficking and exploitation of migrant sex workers.

Plenary discussions will be followed by three workshops: *“The use of media projects in Nicaragua to advocate for women's rights”*;

*“Trafficking and exploitation in Southern Africa: stories from the ground”* and *“Exploitation in the context of global events: examining the connections between women's exploitation and the Olympics”*.

If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to [campaigns@cawn.org](mailto:campaigns@cawn.org) by 19<sup>th</sup> April as there are limited places.

Also keep checking the blog for full updates of the campaign and outcomes of the conference and to share your views.

The project and this event have been funded by the European Commission.



**Volunteer for CAWN and enjoy some of London's top summer events for free!**

We are looking for volunteers to serve beer at various events as a way of raising funds for CAWN through the Workers Beer Scheme. We are likely to have places for events including 'London Live' ([www.btlondonlive.com/victoria-park](http://www.btlondonlive.com/victoria-park)) between 27 July and 12 August; Crystal Palace Garden Party, between 23-24 June, and Proms in the Park on 8 and 9 September.

Please e-mail [debbie.mace1@btinternet.com](mailto:debbie.mace1@btinternet.com) if you can help or to ask for further information. We need to register for places ASAP, so please do consider let us know if you would like to volunteer to support CAWN.

### 3. Central America updates

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#### Nicaragua: landmark “Violence Against Women Act”

On 26 January the Nicaragua Parliament unanimously approved the landmark **Violence Against Women Act**. In Nicaragua, as elsewhere across Central America, gender-based violence has reached endemic proportions and this law represents a significant step in addressing these issues.

The **Violence Against Women Act** is a victory for advocates of women’s rights groups who for years have worked tirelessly to raise awareness of violence against women and women’s rights, and who have campaigned for the government to take action.

The law recognises femicide and other forms of violence against women as criminal acts, punishable by law. The law covers forms of violence including physical, psychological, sexual, property and economic, and workplace violence as well as misogyny and violence against women perpetrated by government officials.



The law also calls for an inter-institutional commission to address the issue as well as the strengthening of government agencies that provide services to women and children and training and education for government officials as to the issues surrounding gender-based violence. The Nicaraguan Parliament also approved a reform to the Penal Code that has

increased the maximum sentence for femicide and other acts of violence against women.

Source: <http://en.maquillasolidarity.org>

#### Nicaragua: Law on women’s political representation passed on International Women’s Day



International Women’s Day on March 8 was marked in Nicaragua with the passing of by the National Assembly of a law proposed by the Sandinista Party (FSLN) that mandates that at least 50 percent of candidates of all political parties for municipal offices be women.

The introduction of the law has received widespread support from across the political spectrum, but its implementation was also marked by an opposition march by women’s rights activists. Their demands included a budget for the implementation of the 26 January Law against Violence toward Women noting that so far this year 15 women had been murdered in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua is now ranked seventh in the world in terms of the percentage of women serving as members of its legislative body. Only Ruanda, Andorra, Cuba, Sweden, Seychelles, and Finland have higher numbers than Nicaragua’s 42.4% women legislators.

Source: Nicaragua Network [www.nicanet.org](http://www.nicanet.org)



## Guatemala: first-ever female vice-president raises hopes for women



The election of Roxana Baldetti as the first woman to be elected vice president of Guatemala has raised hopes amongst women's rights groups of increased female participation in politics.

Roxana Baldetti was sworn in alongside president-elect Otto Pérez Molina on 14 January 2012. Baldetti's election is of great significance in Guatemala, where women hold just 19 of the 158 seats in the single-chamber Congress. Only four of these are indigenous women in a country in which indigenous peoples make up 60 percent of the total population.

Women's advocacy groups have high hopes for the role the vice-president may play in promoting women's rights in different spheres, including education.

Education of girls and women remains a great challenge, especially in the case of indigenous women. Only one in 10 indigenous teenage girls is enrolled in secondary school, and among those who live in extreme poverty, the figure is one in 100, according to a 2007 World Bank study.

The vice president-elect has said she will support educational, health and productive projects for women in rural areas, which she

calls 'the other Guatemala.' Baldetti has stated that 'The duty that falls to me is to do a good job so that more women can go into politics, but above all so that women are taken into account in this country's important decisions.'



Source: ipsnews.net

## Guatemala: task-force to combat femicide as campaign groups continue to fight for justice

With one of the highest murder rates against women in the world and in 2011 the relentless wave of femicides amounted to 705 women's lives lost to gender-related violence. The total showed an increase from the 675 deaths recorded in 2010, with most deaths a result of gunfire. From 2000 to 2010, 5,200 women were killed in Guatemala as a result of gender-related violence, according to police figures.

Recently elected president Otto Pérez Molina has formed a "task-force to combat femicide", which is the term used in Guatemala to denote gender-motivated killings. Women's organisations define femicide more precisely as the phenomenon whereby women are murdered because they are women.

This task-force, created under the Interior Ministry, the body in charge of domestic security, will be headed by former Prosecutor Mirna

Carrera and will focus on intelligence and investigative efforts with the aim of preventing more women from being murdered.

Women's advocacy groups have continued to demonstrate to demand justice for victims. In an unprecedented demonstration, more than 10,000 people climbed the Volcán de Agua, 50 kilometres southwest of Guatemala City to protest against domestic violence.



Protestors aimed to make the world's largest human chain, spelling out "2012" in the middle of a heart on the top of the volcano. The "Climb for Life" campaign included civil society organisations, youth movements, private sector companies, and foreign embassies. Perez Molina and his vice-president Roxana Baldetti also joined the protestors via helicopter.



In 2011 UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon pledged to 'support Central America's fight against violence' and extended the mandate of the UN commission against Impunity in Guatemala for two more years.

Source: ipsnews.net

## Knife attack against human rights defender in Mexico City



Human rights defender and founder of Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa – NHRC (May our Daughters Return Home), Norma Andrade, was attacked on 3 February in Mexico City.

The knife attack follows a previous attempt to take Ms Andrade's life in December 2011, when she was shot at five times at her home in Ciudad Juárez. According to information received, she was discharged from hospital after a couple of days following death threats directed at staff treating her. Following this attack, she moved to Mexico City where her location was supposed to be known only by federal and state officials.

Norma Andrade founded NHRC following the abduction, rape, torture and murder of her daughter Lilia Alejandra García Andrade in Ciudad Juárez on 14 February 2001. There is also concern for Ms Andrade's other daughter and President of NHRC, Malú García Andrade after her house was set fire to in February 2011.

For more information and to take action, please visit <http://www.awid.org/Library/Knife-attack-against-human-rights-defender-Ms-Norma-Andrade>

## Central America: Women's Lives and Women's Struggles

*In March CAWN Director Marilyn Thomson published an article underlining that whilst the daily lives of millions of women in Mexico and Central America continue to be marked by poverty and exploitation, their voices are being heard more clearly than ever before. Here we provide the main findings of Marilyn's article.*

There is still much to fight against: discrimination against women, reinforced by *machista* cultural attitudes, and the fundamentalist views of the conservative church. Neoliberal economic policies go hand in hand with international 'free' trade agreements which have devastated markets, destroyed jobs and led to disputes over indigenous territories.

The vibrant women's movement in Central America is organised and protesting against the injustices and violations of women's rights and joining with other groups in the struggle for social justice. Women workers and environmentalists are fighting for community land rights and to defend their labour rights. In Guatemala indigenous women are advocating the preservation of their communities which are being threatened by industrial projects, such as mining and agro-industries. In Honduras women's organisations have joined with campesino organisations to protest against the killing and violent eviction of smallholders from their lands in the Bajo Aguán



Valley in a two year conflict with wealthy land owners.

The region has seen an alarming increase in extreme forms of violence against women and in the violation of women's human rights while Protest against femicide in Guatemala governments typically lack the capacity or the political will to guarantee women's rights and safety. In Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras violence against women has been linked to the growth in organised crime and drug cartels and the army and security forces have also been implicated in the escalating violence. Women are also brutally killed as a result of domestic violence.

Femicide is the term used to define these brutal killings of women. This phenomenon was first reported in Ciudad Juárez in Mexico in the 1990s and since then more than 400 women have been killed.

Femicide is being reported by women's organisations throughout the region. In Honduras in 2011 an estimated 390 women were violently killed, many of whom had been sexually abused, and in the first two weeks of 2012 the murders of 12 women were reported to the State Prosecutor, the Fiscalía de la Mujer.

Women's organisations have come together to share information and data and have found a common trend in the region: the State does not systematically collect data on the causes of women's deaths, it turns a blind eye and does not investigate these crimes and, as a result, few perpetrators of violence against women have been brought to justice.

Women's right activists and organisations campaigning against femicide are putting their own security on the line. In Honduras levels of violence have increased since the coup in 2009,





leading to a generalised climate of fear and insecurity. Journalists, students and women human rights defenders are among the groups targeted: they have been harassed, tortured, and disappeared and 17 journalists have been murdered.

Women's organisations in Central America are also campaigning for women's reproductive rights and freedoms, especially as strict laws criminalising abortion have led to high maternal mortality rates in the region.

Traditional and fundamentalist religious views are increasingly influencing government policy in some countries. For example, a recent ruling by the Supreme Court of Justice in Honduras supported a bill passed by Congress that penalises the use, sale and distribution or dissemination of information about the emergency contraceptive (morning after) pill.

In the UK the Central American women's rights agendas are largely invisible in policy debates and on donor agendas. British NGOs and donors are pulling out or scaling back activities in the region and the Department for International Development (DFID) has stated that Central America is not a priority for the UK aid programme.

*The full article is available online at* [http://www.lab.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1274:womens-lives-and-womens-struggles&catid=57:focus&Itemid=39](http://www.lab.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1274:womens-lives-and-womens-struggles&catid=57:focus&Itemid=39)



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