

# *Voices of Peace*



*May  
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*Action  
Pack*

*from*

***THE BALKANS AND  
THE CAUCASUS***

The 2009 May 24 Action Pack *'Voices of Peace from the Balkans and the Caucasus'* contains contributions by: Lesley Abdela, Angelika Arutyunova, Isabelle Geuskens, Merle Gosewinkel, Laura Hassler and Michael Greenwald, Jan Schaake and Fazel Ahmad, Gulnara Shahinian and José de Vries

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Copies of the information pack from previous years are available from the International Peace Bureau and IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program (contact: [j.devries@ifor.org](mailto:j.devries@ifor.org)).



**Content International Women's Day for Peace and  
Disarmament Action Pack 2009:  
Voices of Peace from the Balkans and the Caucasus**

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## **Editorial: Voices of Peace from the Balkans and the Caucasus**

**By Isabelle Geuskens**

These days it seems that United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)<sup>1</sup> is finally getting the attention it deserves. Several countries are in the process of launching a National Action Plan, with thirteen countries already having produced one, including Denmark (2005), Norway (2005), the United Kingdom (2006), Sweden (2006), Austria (2007), Switzerland (2007), The Netherlands (2007), Spain (2008), Finland (2008), Iceland (2008), Côte D'Ivoire (2008), Uganda (2008), and most recently, Liberia (2009).

Despite this promising trend, there is still work to be done, as the articles in this pack point out. For instance, the case of Kosovo/a described by Lesley Abdela serves as a wake-up call, reminding us once more how long it can take before good intentions filter down to policy level and into daily practice.

For despite the existence of UNSCR 1325, the women of Kosovo/a were largely ignored in the deliberations on Kosovo/a's future. The right ingredients seemed to be present: Willing and skilled women leaders aware of UNSCR 1325, combined with lobbying and solidarity support from sisters from other Balkan countries and beyond. So what happened?

It turned out that the ones in charge of making sure who would be at the negotiation tables forgot to consider the commitments made under UNSCR 1325 – those in charge being the ones usually looked upon as the experts regarding such matters. As one Kosovo/an women activist described it: *"The international community has marginalised us women in a way we never had been before. We have never felt so pushed aside as we feel now."*

The Kosovo/a case reminds us that paper alone does not guarantee practice.

Moreover, the Kosovo/a case poses a challenge to those in power.

The real question at stake is: "Are we as an international community, instead of focusing on women in conflict situations as a victimized group, aware of our own attitudes and biases towards this same group, and hence, *our* need to change? Do we recognize them as important actors for change, and hence engage them as such?"

The question urges us not to lose sight of the bigger picture, a picture that also includes the gender-sensitivity of those countries and institutions that ultimately have a lot of influence in terms of deciding what actually happens to women in conflict regions. We should not overlook the fact that women in these countries are still not equally represented at political level, meaning they have less of a voice in decisions regarding war and peace on a global scale. Women activist groups in these regions are also facing challenges; finding it increasingly difficult to keep their activism going as financial and moral support for their work is hard to come by. And as the article of Lesley Abdela points out, within the UN itself, women are heavily under-represented when it comes to heading UN Peace Operations. Nonetheless, women's representation at all these levels is key in terms of ensuring that 1325 can become a reality, at home *and* on the global stage.

Let's always remember that UNSCR 1325 is the outcome of women from different parts of the world gathering in Beijing in 1995. "1325 advocates" from the North, South, East, and West, by linking efforts, can make sure that crucial information reaches the right actors at the right time, across the different chains of influence and decision-making. The more we are aware of our interconnectedness, the more we can strategize as how to use this to our best advantage.

This year's WPP May 24 celebration, taking place in Utrecht, the Netherlands (see also [www.ifor.org/WPP](http://www.ifor.org/WPP)) will be one such attempt. It will create a space for women peacemakers from the Caucasus, the Balkans and Western Europe to share their insights and experiences, reflect on obstacles, and strategize how to move forward.

This May 24 pack provides first-hand information from women peacemakers working in these regions, revealing how the regions of the Balkans and Caucasus share, besides some differences, many similarities. Although the problems in both regions are not featured prominently on today's global political agenda, stability in these regions is crucial for global peace. Let that not be an alarming thought, but an inspiring one which engages us into collaborative action.

*Isabelle Geuskens is the Program Manager of the Women Peacemakers Program of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation*

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<sup>1</sup> UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security was adopted by the UN Security Council on 31 October 2000. It specifically addresses the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

## Women's Activism from the Balkans: An Interview with Women in Black

By José de Vries

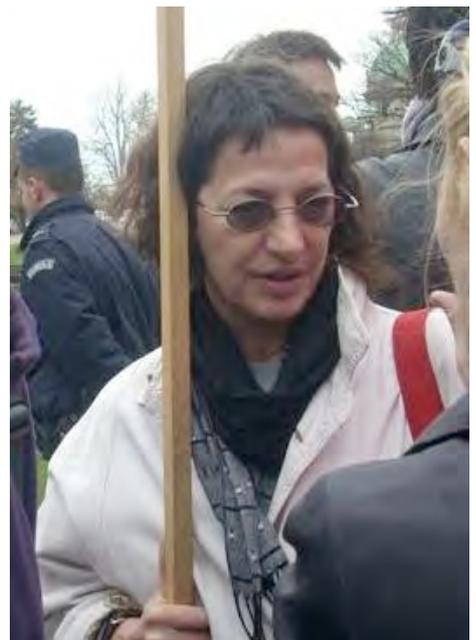
Women in Black is a feminist, anti-militarist organization that started in Serbia in 1991. There is currently an international Women in Black network composed of organizations active all over the world. The organization defines antimilitarism and non-violence as its spiritual orientation and political choice. It rejects military power and the production of arms for the killing of people and for the domination of one sex, nation, or state over another. Women in Black believes that the participation of women in the army, military institutions, or arms training—whether voluntary or obligatory—represents neither sexual equality nor military democratization. The organization advocates not only a society without soldiers (male or female), but also one without the militaristic (soldierly) values that lead to war, discrimination, violence, and aggression.

Since Women in Black has such a profound influence on activists in the Balkans, WPP spoke with Zorica Trifunovic, an activist who has been involved with this organization from the beginning.

 **What kind of challenges does Women in Black face in its work and how do you try to deal with those?**

Activists from Women in Black face many challenges. One of the major ones is the fact that we lack support from the government and from other authorities and consequently also from the general public. We think it's important that war crimes be talked about and that war criminals be convicted, whether through the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague or at domestic courts such as the Special Court for War Crimes (in Serbia) and other courts in the region. That is hardly the general opinion in the Balkans, however. The majority of people don't want that: war criminals are treated there as heroes. Ultranationalist groups even openly support war criminals. We clarify this by pointing out that there are *'different forms of patriotism in society'*. In general, I think that Women in Black receives more support from other countries, like from people in Bosnia, than it does from people within Serbia.

The cultural atmosphere and the threat of violence are other challenges for us. Since 2002, Women in Black has been receiving police escorts when organizing public events. This is because ultranationalist groups have openly threatened us, and the police want to prevent physical confrontations during our public events, which they often characterize as 'high-risk events'. I would like to say that we have never asked for these police escorts and that we never really talk to policemen, either, so I don't know what the police and individual policemen really think of us and our views and objectives. Anyhow, we feel that this extremely militarized 'protection' during our public protests is clear proof of police 'panic' and of the fact that there is no political will in Serbia to forbid Nazi and clerofascist groups from targeting us and similar organizations. On the other hand, these excessive security measures separate us from 'normal' people. In the dominant nationalistic system of values, people like us, who are outside of the nationalistic consensus, are seen as a danger. On an individual level, the policemen are just doing their job, which is to prevent violent clashes on the streets, and we are not experiencing any problems with them. Anyway, this technique of 'protection' could be widely discussed.



Zorica Trifunovic  
Photo: Women in Black

Another challenge is how to get younger activists involved. This is a problem that many activist organizations face in our region. The younger women were born and have grown up in different political circumstances than the older ones. They are focusing on different things as well, and it is difficult to actively involve them in our movements and organizations. We do not have any structural financial support and we work mainly with unpaid staff, i.e. volunteers, since we do not have the money to hire people. It can be quite a burden for those volunteers to actively contribute to our activities if they also need a paid job to survive.

 **Is Women in Black working with women's organizations throughout the region?**

Yes, we are very well connected with numerous women's groups throughout the region. We have good cooperation with women's groups from Croatia as well as from Bosnia & Herzegovina, especially with women survivors from Srebrenica. However, that is often complicated by administrative, political and practical challenges.

For instance, we have been working together with women's groups from Kosovo for some years now, trying to establish a network and to encourage women activists from Kosovo to get involved on a political level. While the contacts between us have been there for many years already, we had never really worked before on strategic cooperation. We organized some meetings in order to explore this. Due to travel restrictions, it was necessary to organize the meetings in Macedonia in order for women of the groups to be able to meet. Some strategic cooperation was built up there.

Women in Black has considerable experience with activism and we mainly work on the political level, whereas the women's organizations in Kosovo were working more on the local and community levels. We tried to encourage the groups to get more involved on the political level and to lobby for more attention for women's issues at that level. Women in Black has a long history of feminist thinking and activism, and we have tried to encourage and support our friends from Kosovo with our experience.

However, that was condemned by some other groups and organizations in both Kosovo and Serbia. We were unable to explore the cooperation in an open way. Since Kosovar independence was proclaimed, the contact has decreased, although we are not quite sure why. Currently, we feel it is important for the women in Kosovo to define how they see the cooperation and strategic networking and to make the next move in the cooperation. The personal contacts are still there and will remain. Perhaps the situation in Kosovo needs to calm down first before any further strategic cooperation can take place.

Another example of cooperation and the exploration of networking dates from 2006. At that time, we were invited by the Heinrich Böll Foundation<sup>2</sup> to participate in exchange visits between women's organizations from the South Caucasus (Georgia, Abkhazia, Azerbaijan) and the Balkans. It was an interesting exchange, and we spoke about many things, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. There were two visits of women activists from the South Caucasus to this region and also two visits of Women in Black activists to countries in the South Caucasus. The exchange in which I participated in 2007 I felt was a relatively short, however. With only eight days, loaded with numerous meetings in different cities, we did not have enough time to discuss challenges and issues in depth and to encourage the women in their work. The exchanges should be of a more in-depth and structured nature.

***"A practical challenge in establishing a more profound contact is the language barrier"***

I think it is very important to exchange ideas with other groups, especially those with a comparable background and history, such as women's groups in the South Caucasus. The contact established through exchange visits needs to be nurtured in order to grow. However, we lack the funds to enable that. Countries in the Balkans are receiving less donor money in general, since those countries are now perceived to be relatively stable and democratic compared to other areas such as Gaza or Sudan. We think that women's organizations in the South

Caucasus would stand a better chance of raising funds for these sorts of exchange and network initiatives if they found them useful. Another practical challenge in terms of establishing a more profound contact with women's organizations from the South Caucasus is the language barrier: the majority of women in the South Caucasus speak Russian and/or their mother tongue but lack a knowledge of English. At the same time, translations are expensive and time consuming.

 **What do you think are the similarities and differences between the Balkans and the Caucasus in terms of the position of women and at the activist work they are doing?**

I think that in the Balkans we are quite focused on working across national and ethnic borders. In the South Caucasus, most of the organizations are working along ethnic lines and nationalist feelings. This is less the case in the Balkans thanks to our feminist inheritance, which includes a sense of solidarity that transcends ethnic divisions. I see that we try to think more in terms of general human rights, rather than ethnicity-based (human) rights. It must be very difficult for women activists in the South Caucasus region to get out of these ethnic boxes. On the other hand, that does open doors for them to work on the local and community levels.

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<sup>2</sup> The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the development of democratic civil societies worldwide. For more information, visit their website: <http://www.boell.be/>

Another difference is the economic and political situation. The economic situation in the South Caucasus is worse, compared to the Balkans. Also, people in the South Caucasus seem to be more afraid of openly questioning their leaders and their leaders' actions, since they still feel trapped in a dictatorial system.

### **What do you feel is the role of religion in the areas?**

After the collapse of socialism and communism, the role of religion has become more important in both regions, I think. Increasingly, religion is having an important influence on several levels of society, including politics and education. For instance, there is a cleric on nearly every board in Serbia nowadays. We really fear that the various states in the Balkans are losing their secular character. People in the Balkans are categorized along religious lines: all Serbs are seen as Orthodox, all Croats are defined as Catholics, all Bosnians are seen as Muslims, and so on. All these categorizations are present in the other spheres of life as well. The Serbian constitution only recognizes four religious groups: Orthodox, Catholics, Muslims and Jews. As a result, all other religious groups and especially atheists are stigmatized.

Ever since we formed as a group, also in the last several years, we have been quite active in spreading information on the role of religion(s) in society through the numerous brochures that we have produced and the public events that we have organized. The discussions have become more profound. We started by discussing the role of the church in the war and in war crimes, such as the fact that it approved of the violence, rather than actively condemning it. But we have also focused on how the church perceives the position of women in society and in families as well as its fundamentalist threat to contemporary society.

In general, we are facing increasing clericalization: interference from religious institutions in affairs of state and in legislative spheres, which violates the Constitution and attacks democratic values such as human rights in general, women's human rights, etc. As an organization, Women in Black, initiated the *Coalition for a Secular State* to work against the danger of clericalization in Serbia.

### **Is there anything you would like to add?**



Women in Black is and will remain active in various areas. We are constantly developing our ideas more thoroughly. One of our recent activities has been the publication of a book (which has also been translated into English as *Women's Side of War*), on the difficult roles that women had to play in the wars from 1991 to 1999. It contains 120 stories of women from the countries affected by the Balkan wars. We also created a theatre play based on the book, which toured in several cities in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia in 2008. If we manage to find more funding, we could show it in other places as well. The cooperation with the artists has been quite successful so far, and it's a really good way to bring information to the people.



*Theatre play based on the book  
Women's Side of War*

*Photo: Women in Black*



*José de Vries is IFOR's WPP  
Information Officer.*

*For more information on Women in  
Black and its activities, please visit  
its website:*

<http://www.zeneucnom.org/>



## ***Women in the Caucasus: A Creative and Spiritual Foundation for Democracy and Peace***

***By Gulnara Shahinian***

**W**omen's organizations from the Caucasus have undergone an incredible change in the last two decades: from strict, Soviet-directed organizations to self-organized groups trying to respond immediately to the needs of the turbulent time resulting from the declaration of independence. Working mostly in the background, invisible and unrecognized, women's genuine creative power and wisdom has helped to achieve and sustain temporary peace in the region. The various actions that women have implemented to sustain peace have been developed through a gradual process. Women in civil-society organizations have traditionally been active in structural prevention, meaning long-term programs and actions to reduce violence, but also work to protect human rights, justice, equality, good governance and human security. Recently, women have also started conducting immediate, short-term conflict prevention activities during this time of crisis. Their strategies include early warning and early response, as well as preventive measures. An analysis of the actions that women have taken in the Caucasus reveals that those mainly concern structural prevention. Today we can name many outstanding women and organizations run by women, whose work has been groundbreaking in promoting and sustaining peace and stability in the Caucasus.

### ***Background environment***

In 2009, in a period when the difference between the Soviet time and the time of independence with its transition to democracy has been getting somewhat fuzzy, only the older generation remembers the benefits of the Soviet regime, whereas the young generation is more opportunistic with regard to life in a new environment, creating their own history and future. This is especially true for women.

Strangely enough, and despite their different goals, both systems display a similar approach towards manipulating people by means of internal and external threats—sometimes real, sometimes imaginary—in order to stay in control. In Soviet times, people's sense of insecurity, resulting from external threats, was used to support the architecture of an autocratic regime. This included the extermination of millions of people, the forced deportation from one area of the country to the other, and ethnic cleansing in order to rule and divide the ethnically rich and diverse Caucasus, with its almost 50 different ethnicities. Exactly this factor has challenged the attempts in the past century to draw political borders in the region. The three largest ethnic groups in the Caucasus are the groups corresponding to the names of the three independent states of today: the Armenians, the Azerbaijanis, and the Georgians.

Independence has been accepted by the people living in the Caucasus as a process to rediscover their rights and identity and to correct the mistakes made by previous regimes, as well as to explore living in a democracy. This means to freely express their identity and to use their language, culture and history. But many problems have been left unsolved, such as ethnic tensions, coupled with a certain "emotionalism" regarding identity, the emergence of national and religious radicalism, the development of new governments and geopolitical competition between regional and state powers. All this has created strong instability in the region, which in turn has led to conflicts and sometimes even full-scale wars, when urgent measures were not taken.

The internal hidden security threats are even more destructive, since they are gradually destroying the value system, endangering the internal stability and leaving people unprotected. This includes an unprecedented increase in structural corruption, a selective application of the law, the absence and/or limitation of democratic freedoms, the infiltration of power structures and legislative bodies by criminals, poverty, unemployment and the faking of apparently growing state activities and prosperity. And the same old Soviet formula is reappearing as well: using propaganda and people's collective conscience against external threats and enemies.



*Gulnara Shahinian – UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery  
Photo: UN OHCHR*

## **Conflicts in the Caucasus: Women's role in peacebuilding**

Until recently, there were considered to be three unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus that had been frozen thanks to cease-fire agreements: the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over mountainous Nagorno-Karabakh region and the fights in Georgia between the central government and the secessionist territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, respectively. While negotiations over the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh have stagnated over the past few years, South Ossetia and Abkhazia have declared themselves to be independent states, with a very fragile stability as a result of military activities in August 2008.

In the past decade, all the three states have seen high levels of political violence, using arms and force against internal discontent to reach political goals. Political instability and civil conflicts have seriously worsened the economic situation in the entire region and had a deep impact on the welfare of the population. The rampant corruption, the unresponsiveness of governments, the violation of basic constitutional rights during elections and the growing gap between a privileged elite that holds economic and political power and the rest of the population are also threatening the stability within the countries.

To achieve long-term peace and stability in the war-torn societies, women, who compose more than half of the population, should play an important role in all stages. They helped to develop structural approaches to conflict prevention and complex programs to promote peace during the peace process and should therefore be involved in peace negotiations. The voice of more than half of the population should be heard during peace negotiations and in the reconciliation process. Irrespective of the fact that women are extremely active in the peace process and reconciliation, the participation of women in peace negotiations is still very limited. This is despite the fact that women are often the ones affected the most by the consequences of war and the ones most likely to cooperate and work towards peaceful solutions. Changes within the countries towards a more authoritarian regime, as well as changes on international level, also have had a strong impact on the women's peace movement.

### **Transformation of roles**

Over almost two decades, women have faced many challenges, but at the same time, the independence has also provided them with many important opportunities. Indeed the new, transformative roles women have played in the peace process have changed long-established stereotypes. Having limited experience in public work, they have intuitively found new ways to respond to the changes. In terms of economic survival, they have created new or reinvented livelihoods to provide for their families and to help others in the community, though sometimes at a very high price.

***"Over almost two decades, women have faced many challenges, but at the same time, the independence has also provided them with many important opportunities"***

The women have developed social networks and groups to assist others, such as poor families, orphans, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and families of veterans, and they have been pioneers in building bridges between parties and regions in conflict. The groups have now developed into well-established NGOs. As culturally designated caregivers, women in the Caucasus work hard to support their families and to keep their households together while the traditional breadwinners—their husbands and sons—are caught up in the fighting and thus unable to provide for their families. Sometimes their new role as the main provider exposes the women to further abuse. Women peacemakers from South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh have become role models in the area of peacebuilding.

### **Examples of initiatives in the Caucasus**

Women in the region have realized that to sustain peace they need to work together, and their activities have to complement each other. The cooperation between NGOs working in peacemaking has become stronger. One important initiative, that later developed into the regional project *Women of the Caucasus for Peace*, was the organization of a peace camp for Abkhazian, Georgian and Ossetian children by the Association of IDPs together with the UNV organization. Later, other groups from the conflicting parties in the South Caucasus—Armenian and Azerbaijani children—joined this initiative. It was important that many NGOs from the region united their efforts and developed initiatives and programs for children from post-conflict areas on a regular basis. The publication of the children's peace magazine *White Crane* was one of the long-lasting and important initiatives to spread ideas of peace throughout the region.

Another important regional initiative was one that UNIFEM started in 2001: Women for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in the Southern Caucasus. Throughout its work, the project managed to mobilize over 200 women-

run NGOs, women's groups and individual women in the three countries of the Southern Caucasus and to organize them in a national women-for-peace network.

UNIFEM also supported the national women's network Unity of Women for Peace, which works in Georgia to achieve greater gender equality and sustainable peace with the participation of women. In the framework of that project, women have carried out many people-to-people diplomacy initiatives bringing Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian women together to share their views regarding gender equality and peacebuilding. The network actively uses UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in its advocacy work and lobbies the governments to enforce them.

*"How I started?"* asks Anahit Bayandur, an Olof Palme Prize laureate—having received that peace award with her partner from Azerbaijan, Arzu Abdullaeva, in 1993. *"While I was in Moscow I met my writer friend from Azerbaijan, who told me about the growing anti-Armenian mood in Azerbaijan and the escalation of hatred. Back in Yerevan I called all my friends from both sides, intellectuals from Armenia and Azerbaijan, and organized an excellent meeting on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan."* It was a powerful start, giving birth to an important peacebuilding process. Since then, many activities have been developed, much local and international support has been received and a young generation of peacemakers, trained by local branches of the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly, established groups in all three countries of the Caucasus. Now the youth organize their own peace activities regionally.

Currently Anahit Bayandur and Arzu Abdullaeva run many important projects locally to sustain peace and stability in the Caucasus. One of the projects organized by Anahit is the Democracy School, which establishes civil-society groups and resource centers in all regions of Armenia, where new political events and democratic developments can be discussed.

### **Capacity building**

International agencies in the region were very helpful in building the capacity of local organizations and people through organizing seminars, conferences and training programs. They focused not only on developing skills and knowledge, but also on developing understanding, respect and cooperation between women in the region.

The practice shows that the combination of discussions and training activities is most successful during bilateral and multilateral meetings. It gives a framework for discussing issues related to the conflicts, but also provides an opportunity to learn from others and their experiences in order to find a solution to the problems. UNSCR 1325 has become the subject of numerous workshops and joint seminars in the region.

Women from the region very much benefited from consultations organized by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and later jointly organized a conference and training for peacemakers from Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Peace education is traditionally carried out by women's organizations. Over a number of years, the capacity of women's organizations and groups working on this issue was increased through education and training, dialogue seminars and internships. Organizations such as the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), Conciliation Resources and the Berghof Foundation assisted their partners in developing training curricula and manuals and in organizing informal educational courses, workshops, and bilateral and multilateral meetings among women and young people.

To multiply the efforts and to make peace education accessible in the far-off regions, numerous publications were jointly developed by representatives of the three countries and those have been widely distributed. Special training materials have also been developed, including the gender- and peace-education manual entitled *Gender and PeaceBuilding*, which is currently available only in three local languages and Russian. There have also been many important studies and publications that are a good resource for peacemakers.

***"We have built strong friendships and understanding and a network that will stand against any hatred"***

### **Moving forward**

*"How would you evaluate your work?"* I asked Anahit Bayandur.

*"I think we have achieved so much on the way; much has been learned. We have become much stronger, our opinions and voices have been heard at a very high level, and we have not allowed ourselves to become isolated from each other in our respective regions or to build up animosity."*

In conversations with women peacemakers in different cities in the Caucasus, concerns were raised about the lack of transparency in the governments' approach towards resolutions and their very limited cooperation with and involvement in peace negotiations, even in preparatory consultations. This was explained to be the result of a stagnant process of resolution, the absence of a solution that would fit the political parties, the growing tendency towards an authoritarian system and the ignoring of the civil society's opinion.

Another concern that women have raised is that the impact of their actions against war and military activities in various parts of the world is not big. Wars are initiated by governments, and the peaceful population suffers from the ambitions and pragmatic geopolitical interests of the states.

Does the lack of impact mean that women activists should stop their work? When I asked that question to some of them, they responded by saying that they needed to be more creative and innovative in their actions and that stronger unity is necessary, not only in the Caucasus but also worldwide. They also think it's important to develop actions to involve more women and men in their activities. On March 8, 2008, thousands of women from conflict areas throughout the Caucasus region organized peace marches at the same time, bringing their children and husbands. The materials on this event have been distributed worldwide.

To assist the people of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, women from all over the Caucasus have been organizing support letters, campaigns to stop military activities and rallies. Women from all over Armenia were calling Democracy Today (since we mostly work in rural areas) to ask how they could help, and many have brought packages to send to people in the areas of conflict. It shows the women's will and their strength.



*Gulnara Shahinian is a Board member of "Democracy Today" and the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.*

*For more information on the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, please visit the website: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)*



## ***Women Activists and Their Work in the Caucasus: An Interview with Lara Aharonian from the Women’s Resource Center in Yerevan, Armenia***

***By Merle Gosewinkel***

**T**he Women’s Resource Center in Yerevan, Armenia, was founded in July 2003. It is a “drop-in” center, open to all women regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and social status. The Yerevan center focuses in its work on educational issues and activities on subjects such as women’s rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and sexual violence.



*Lara Aharonian*  
*Photo: Women’s Resource Center*

The Women’s Resource Center supports women and provides resources to empower them against gender discrimination. The women conduct awareness campaigns on pending gender issues and to help fight restricting gender roles. An important topic of these campaigns is sexual violence, which is still a great taboo subject in Armenia. The Yerevan center has also established a hotline for victims of sexual assault. They help women who have experienced sexual violence get information, link them with doctors, refer them to lawyers, give basic counseling, and accompany them to appointments if necessary.

In 2006, another Women’s Resource Center was opened in Shushi, a town in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh in the South Caucasus. The center in Shushi is mainly working on the issue of women and peace building in the Caucasus.

Lara Aharonian, one of the women who started the work of the Women’s Resource Center, was interviewed for this article to elaborate on her work in the Caucasus. She works mainly in the Yerevan center, but travels once a month to the region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

### ***Activities***

In this conflict area<sup>3</sup>, the women of the Women’s Resource Center are working on developing a dialogue between the neighboring areas, trying to resolve the conflict and the resentments on both sides. From the 11<sup>th</sup> till the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, 2009, they initiated a meeting in Istanbul between women from Armenia and Azerbaijan who used to work and live in the area of Nagorno-Karabakh. The women taking part in that meeting were not activists, but “regular” women: mothers and workers from the region. The aim of the meeting was to talk about the relationship between women from both areas, to establish the similarities between them, and to try to fight prejudices. Lara recalls it being a good meeting, although conflicts arose between the women of the two regions. It was the first meeting between the two groups without a third-party mediator. At first, she explained, it was a case of “meeting the enemy”, but the women on both sides eventually saw that “the others” were in fact very much like themselves, facing the same issues and problems in their daily life, having their lives affected by the conflict. She sees the women’s changing perceptions of “the other” as the main outcome of the meeting. Before, they had been enormously influenced by “enemy” thinking. Through workshops on everyday subjects like music or food, they discovered how much they had in common, which in turn increased their understanding of the women they had previously considered to be their enemy.



*The disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh in the South Caucasus*  
*Photo: Wikimedia Commons*

<sup>3</sup> The region is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but de facto governed by the internationally unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. The war between the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, who form the ethnic majority in the region, and the Republic of Azerbaijan lasted from 1988 until 1994. The Armenians were backed by the Republic of Armenia.

## Challenges and obstacles

Regarding the peace work of the Resource Center, the main challenge for the women who working there is to explain their conflict-resolution work to the people in the home community. Those women, who are working hard to resolve the tensions between the neighboring areas by initiating dialogue, are seen as traitors in their own society. Therefore they have to emphasize to their community leaders that it is their right to meet with women from the other areas that are involved in the conflict and that they no longer want to be marginalized and ignored in the peace process.

Asked what she sees as one of the reasons for this opposition to conflict resolution, Lara Aharonian answered that nationalism is a big obstacle in the fight for women's rights. After the downfall of the Soviet Union, communist values in society were replaced by nationalism. People in Armenia are afraid of losing their identity if they have to compromise too much when negotiating for peace. The rise of the nationalistic traditions also challenges the work for women's rights, because nationalists see women first and foremost as mothers who should stay at home and take care of the kids. Fighting for women's rights means attacking nationalist ideas, which makes the situation sometimes difficult, if not dangerous, for the activists.

***"Nationalism is a big obstacle in the fight for women's rights"***

Another difficulty they face in their peace work is getting rid of resentments on both sides. Building trust, Lara Aharonian says, is very difficult. Generated by state propaganda and the local media, the hatred is too deep-seated to be let go of easily. It takes a lot of time and patience to break down the wall of fear that has been built up over such a long period. They did not manage to tear down that wall at the meeting in Istanbul, Lara Aharonian says, but at least they started to make some holes in it there. To keep the momentum of this successful meeting, they decided to meet more often, although the focus will be less on the conflict issue than on jointly developing skills as women leaders.

The Women's Resource Center in Yerevan organized a march through that city on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, International Women's Day. Lara Aharonian explained that, in Armenia, that day does not focus on political issues; rather it is celebrated as a "beauty" day, maybe also comparable to Valentine's Day. To change this perception of International Women's Day, the Resource Center initiated a march, claiming that they no longer want flowers, but rights. Part of this whole event was the symbolic burying of the "red apple". In the Armenian tradition, the red apple symbolizes virginity, and red apples are traditionally given out on the day after a wedding to emphasize that the bride was still a virgin. The symbolic act of *burying* a red apple created a big uproar in Armenian society. The women were verbally attacked by many people who accused them of bringing Western values to Armenia and of being "feminist". On their part, the women emphasized that this action was not intended to proclaim that women should have a lot of sex, but rather to state that every woman has the right to choose her own personal life and sexuality. Whether she wants to remain a virgin or have sex before marriage should be a woman's own, private decision and not anyone else's concern. A group of young men tried to stop the women's march, and the police brought the women to a halt but later let them continue their activity, since the women were doing nothing that would have justified their being stopped. The positive side, according to Lara, was that it gave the women a lot of media attention. She emphasized that they try to push the limits in their peace work, which of course sometimes provokes opposition from others in Armenian society, but so far they have not faced any serious problems. The community discusses many of the issues brought up by the center, but the women there also get a lot of support for their work. People regard the center's work as being very necessary.



*The Women's Resource Center works together with many regional youth groups*  
*Photo: Women's Resource Center*

Lara Aharonian explained that the whole issue of sexual violence/rape is very difficult to work on, since there is still such a taboo on talking about it in Armenia. Being a victim of rape is seen as something shameful for the woman—and also for her family—because the value of a woman in this patriarchal society is closely connected to her virginity. Therefore women often remain quiet about any sexual abuse they have faced. The attitude of blaming the woman who was raped, by calling into question why she was actually there and whether she might have been wearing

something sexually provocative, is still very persistent in Armenian society.

### Collaboration throughout the region

The Women's Resource Center works together with many regional youth groups at universities, colleges, and community centers throughout Armenia, where they show films on the issue of gender. They also give workshops on women's rights and sexual rights for young women in the different regions of Armenia once a month. The women also carry out awareness campaigns on the subject of sexual violence, since people lack knowledge of exactly what sexual violence is. They often get responses like "men are like that in Armenia" or that "it is natural for them to be machos." Lara Aharonian finds it sad to see how many women do not know about their rights. That is why the Center gives regular workshops on the subject of women rights, and they often even have to tell the women about their basic human rights, because they have not heard about those before. In their workshops, they also inform women about CEDAW<sup>4</sup>, about UN Security Council Resolution 1325<sup>5</sup>, about trafficking and about their sexual and reproductive health and rights. It is a five-day training program, with sessions of a few hours every day.

### Religion

Asked about the role of religion in Armenia and whether this in any way influences her work, Lara Aharonian stated that the church is not very powerful in her country. Faith and religion do not play a big role in the society. Most people are Christian, but the church does not influence them much. They go to church out of tradition, but not as an everyday activity.

### Similarities between the Caucasus and the Balkans

Comparing the situation of women in the Caucasus and in the Balkans, Lara Aharonian said that, to her knowledge, the women of both regions face similar problems. While the situation and role of the women in their families and in the public arena are in many respects comparable in both regions, she sees a difference in how actively the women are fighting the existing norms and values. The women of the Balkans seem more active than those of the Caucasus. The latter often seem to be holding back, almost afraid to step up for their rights. Again, this could be caused by the strengthened national identity, which sometimes stops women from claiming their rights as that might threaten the national values. In the Balkans, the society is more ethnically mixed, the people are more used to working together and are also more willing to work with each other across ethnic and regional lines, to focus more on individual rights.

Another difference Lara Aharonian sees between the situation in the Caucasus and that in the Balkans is that many universities in the Balkans are now offering Gender Studies and courses on gender issues, which facilitates discussions of gender at an academic level. In Armenia, no such studies exist. There are some very basic introductory courses on feminism, but that is all. The issue of LGBT<sup>6</sup> is an even greater taboo in Armenian society, while in the Balkans this movement is becoming more and more active and visible. As Lara Aharonian sees it, there is still so much to be done.



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<sup>4</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international convention adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. This Convention was also ratified by Armenia.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 reaffirms the "importance of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peace building..." and stresses "the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security..." Resolution 1325 urges UN Member States, among other measures, to "increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts" (Article 7).

<sup>6</sup> LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.

## More Power, Less Flowers

by Lesley Abdela

All around the world, women have been working to change the old view of women in conflict zones as victims, rather than as an immense, prospective resource for bringing conflicts to an end and building long-term sustainable peace.

### *The exclusion of women in peace negotiations: The example of Kosova*

In 2003, an open letter titled “A cautionary tale from Kosovar women to women in post-war Iraq” was written by the Kosovar Women’s Network. It stated: “We urge and encourage women in Iraq to organize, raise their voice and be part of the rebuilding of their country. We see how the international media portray the women of Iraq. They show only the women wearing black scarves. They have no voice in the media, as if they were not part of Iraq. The same happened with the image of Kosovar women during the war. The international media didn’t show intellectual women on TV. It was as if they did not exist. We know there are strong, organized, intellectual women in Iraq, just as there are strong, organized, intellectual women in Kosova or any other country in the world.”

The letter continued: “Kosovar women started getting organized in the early 1990s and worked very closely with the local parallel (‘underground’) government that resisted the persecution of the Kosovar Albanian population by the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic. When war started in the former Yugoslavia, we became part of the regional women’s networks that raised their voices against the war and provided help to women and refugees in those very hard times. When the war came to Kosova, women’s rights activists became refugees themselves but never stopped working with and for women, this time in refugee camps in Macedonia and Albania. We joyfully greeted the decision to put Kosova under a UN administration. The UN was to us the revered international organization that developed and passed key documents proclaiming the rights of women and promoting their integration at all levels of decision-making. But when we returned home, we were unfortunately disappointed by the UN Mission in Kosova (UNMIK). We were eager to work with the international agencies in developing effective strategies for responding to the pressing needs of Kosovar women, but most of those agencies did not acknowledge our existence and often refused to hear what we had to say on decisions that affected our lives and our future.”

In 2008, the International Contact Group<sup>7</sup> brokered talks on the status of Kosova. The Contact Group included four permanent members of the UN Security Council: the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Russia—four of the very states who had unanimously voted for the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. This Resolution called for the equal participation of women in all aspects of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and reconstruction. Despite continual peaceful lobbying by women, the Contact Group missed a marvelous opportunity to set a future precedent for peace talks. They ignored their own Resolution and sidelined women.

Balkan women, with support from women in other countries, made it clear to the Contact Group that they wanted to be equal partners at the top-table in the peacebuilding processes after their long personal struggles. Women from



*Protester calling for women to be included in the Talks on the future Status of Kosova  
Photo: Kosova Women’s Network Newsletter*

<sup>7</sup> The *Contact Group* is the name for an informal grouping of influential countries that have a significant interest in policy developments in the Balkans. The Contact Group is composed of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia. It was first created in response to the war and the crisis in Bosnia in the early 1990s. The Contact Group includes four of the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and the countries that contribute the most in terms of troops and assistance to peacebuilding efforts in the Balkans. Representatives of the EU Council, the EU Presidency, the European Commission and the NATO generally attend Contact Group meetings.

across the Balkans came together at conferences such as the Women's Peace Coalition Conference "Women, Peace and Security," in Struga, Macedonia, in September 2006. The NGO Women in Black in Belgrade and the Kosova NGO Network comprising 80 women's NGOs conducted an impeccably peaceful, democratic advocacy and lobbying campaign. They demonstrated and lobbied their own politicians as well as Members of the European Parliament and the International Contact Group for the right to be included as equal partners in negotiations. And what was the result? The Contact Group, led by Special Envoy (and Noble Laureate) Marti Ahtisaari, ignored the Balkan women's peaceful requests.

### ***"No women in Kosova are interested in participating in politics or public life"***

There was an unfortunate precedent for excluding women. In 1999, after the NATO bombing within days of my arrival in Pristina, I noted that with one exception, all senior posts in the OSCE mission and the UN mission in Kosova (UNMIK) were held by men. Deeply ignorant of the wishes and capacities of the majority gender, UNMIK



***Women's Peace Coalition Conference "Women, Peace and Security," in Struga, Macedonia, in September 2006***

and OSCE officials regularly discussed which percentage of Serbs and ethnic groups should be represented on judicial, political and public bodies, but never which percentage of women. When I pointed out this discrepancy, they repeated that women in leadership posts would be "alien to local culture and tradition" and that, in any case, *"no women in Kosova are interested in participating in politics or public life."*

International officials appeared to be ignorant of the fact that women in the former Yugoslavia had been judges, lawyers, magistrates, academics, trade unionists and were active in

women had risked their lives alongside men in running over 500 underground schools and providing medical support for the Kosova Liberation Army. Personally or through family loss and rape, they took the brunt of the ethnic cleansing.

politics. For instance, Luleta Pula told me that in 1990 she had headed a 60,000-strong women's wing of the LDK political party! In the last ten years of the brutal Milosevic tyranny, Kosovar

The exclusion of women from the democratization process was highlighted by the fact that Dr Bernard Kouchner, special representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosova, had not appointed any women at all to the Kosovar transitional governing council, even though the UN Beijing Global Platform for Action states that at least one-third of all decision-making positions in politics and public life should be filled by women.

Kosovar women's NGOs were especially angry at being entirely ignored in the democratization process. Igballe Rugova, leader of Motrat Qiriaz, an umbrella of four rural women's networks, told me: *"The international community has marginalized us women in a way we never had been before. We have never felt so pushed aside as we feel now."*

Prompted by the frustrations of the Kosovar women, a UN colleague and I faxed UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to ask him to intervene. As a direct consequence, three Kosovar women NGO leaders were invited to meet with Kofi Annan and Bernard Kouchner. UNMIK agreed to hold regular consultations with women NGO leaders. One woman was subsequently invited to join the interim transitional council and a few Kosovar women leaders were appointed to other posts. The Kosovar women eventually won the right to a 30% quota for women in elections. Other political factors have led to a situation where, for the time-being, few of the men or women in politics and public life have met the hoped for expectations.

### ***Peace for the male power groups***

In far too many peace processes—in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and not least in the Balkans and the Caucasus—the peace is not for the people, but rather for the male power groups. This is the wrong focus. The current practice is that if you are a man responsible for murdering people, bullying, intimidating and grabbing power, money and assets, you will be included at the peace-tables deciding on the future of your community. In addition to a few decent, honorable men, warlords, business mafia, and extremist religious leaders are often invited in. Women civil society leaders and peace campaigners are often left out.

The saying “All conflicts contain the seeds of future conflict” should be rephrased as “All peace agreements contain the seeds of future conflict”. Peacemaking and peacebuilding ought not to be left so overwhelmingly to men, if only for one practical reason: evidence shows that men on their own are not good at it. Currently 50% of all deadly conflicts break out all over again within 10 years. The problem lies at the heart of deeply-flawed peacemaking attempts from which women are completely excluded, from ongoing top-level decision-making on peace- and state-building processes. To echo the words of Peace Campaigner Joan Baez’s classic song: “When will they ever learn?”

### **Masculinities**

In the past nine years I have worked in many countries including Kosovo, Georgia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Russia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and Armenia. I noticed that you can hardly walk around any city in the Balkans or the Caucasus without coming across imposing statuary and iconic paintings and mosaics of this Warrior Chief or that Warrior Chief. School textbooks abound with references to warrior heroes.

***“All peace agreements contain the seeds of future conflict”.***

Over the years it became blindingly clear to me the peace was being compromised and distorted by the masculine belief that somehow war-making was glorious compared to peacemaking. Around the world, boys grow up in an atmosphere of reverence for warmongers. This is especially obvious in the Balkans and the Caucasus. In cities and villages, statues of former war heroes—generals and field marshals—abound.

Long-term, sustainable peacebuilding requires a different set of characteristics, which are often seen as feminine. These include patience, creative dialogue, imagination, empathy, attention to critical details, and the avoidance of grandstanding.

In a lecture at the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (Tbilisi, Georgia), Johan Galtung, Professor of Peace Studies and the director of TRANSCEND, a Peace and Development Network, highlighted three cultural traits that pose considerable obstacles for any Caucasian peace process: the warrior mentality, the “chief” mentality and the victim mentality. The battle mindset means the peace table becomes a verbal battlefield. He noted that in the warrior mentality, negotiations are about winning and not about solving (the issues). He emphasized that “With no strong alternative conflictual concepts around, behaviour aiming at winning, i.e., imposing one’s own goals at the expense of the other parties, will flourish.”

Professor Galtung extols the value of having women at the peace table:

*“Generally speaking, women are less infected than men by these syndromes. Women have certainly been victims. But they are less convinced by the warrior mentality and the chief mentality. They are less obliged to be true believers in such ideas. Being less infected, women are also more free to formulate alternative ideas.”*

### **Progress to date**

I have been participating in the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Global Monitoring Project on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. GAPS is monitoring progress on UNSCR 1325 in six conflict-affected countries: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. The checklist used in the project includes qualitative and quantitative information on issues including women’s rights violations, women’s participation in peace negotiations, gender training and sensitization of militaries, resources allocated to women’s groups and support provided to women survivors of conflict-related violence. The project is still a work in progress, but the data collected so far indicates that many initiatives have taken place on UNSCR 1325. There have been pockets of progress on making 1325 work at the grass-roots and middle levels. UNFPA, UNIFEM and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have been working with women’s NGOs and national governments to implement the Resolution. The United Kingdom, Spain, Austria and other UN Member States have drawn up dedicated National Action Plans for UNSCR 1325.

Nonetheless, the glaring gender gap in the appointment to top posts in UN Peace Missions is something that needs addressing. There has never been a female Head of the UN Mission in Kosovo. Out of 30 current UN peace operations (peacekeeping, political, and peacebuilding missions), only one has a female Chief of Mission: the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative to Liberia, Ilen Margrethe Løj, from Denmark. Apparently, Africa’s first elected female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, specifically requested a female head for the UN Mission in Liberia.

In addition to increasing the chances of sustainable peace, the other reason why women should be equal partners in peacebuilding is to ensure that issues of importance to women’s lives will be high on the agenda. These include

personal security and safety, infrastructure and services, livelihood and employment, property rights, food security, the needs of widows and female former combatants, political representation and decision-making, and preventing impunity for rape.

Thus, from my experience in the Caucasus and the Balkans, a progress report on the implementation of 1325 should read as follows: 'There has been some progress in including women at the grass-roots and middle levels, but there is extreme disappointment at the top levels. Local and international government ministers, politicians, diplomats and other officials have consistently failed to insist that women be included as equal partners at the top table in peace talks.'

On the optimistic side, women now have the bit between their teeth. One thing I have learned is that advocacy takes patience and persistence. Despite the unending struggle to gain a voice, the Kosovar Women's Network ended their open letter to the women of Iraq with the words: "But we did not give up. We raised our voice. We met with UN officials, wrote letters, went to meetings to present our ideas, knowledge and expertise. We talked to donors and built alliances with those international organizations in Kosova and abroad that genuinely saw and related to us as partners in the common efforts to advance the cause of women in our country. This is part of an on-going, multi-layered struggle that women's groups in Kosova have been engaged in during the last four years: a struggle to be part of the decision-making process from day one, a struggle to get better organized and become more effective, a struggle to take the place we deserve in shaping our lives and the future of our society."

### Recommendations for

- ⚡ **Politicians, diplomats and donors** involved in peace negotiations: insist that peace negotiations will not be considered valid without at least 40% men and at least 40% women participating at the top tables. This would be a natural next step to a precedent that has emerged in post-conflict parliamentary elections. One-third of the countries with over 30% women in parliament are countries recovering from conflict: Rwanda, Mozambique, Nepal, Burundi, Uganda, Angola, South Africa, and Iraq.
- ⚡ **Governments of UN Member States** putting forward names to the UN Secretary General to head up UN Missions: nominate at least one qualified women and one qualified man. Perhaps an even better suggestion would be that all nominees should be qualified women until there is a 50/50 gender balance.
- ⚡ **Citizens:** erect more statues and memorials to honor peace activists.
- ⚡ **Education departments:** include human rights, peace and democracy activists in school textbooks.
- ⚡ **Civil society activists:** keep advocating for women to be included at all levels of conflict-prevention talks and peace talks.



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## Reflections on humanitarian interventions in Georgia and Kosovo

By Jan Schaake and Fazel Ahmad

Shortly after the violence erupted in Georgia in early August 2008, 'Kerk en Vrede'—the Dutch branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation—released a statement that said: “The use of military means can never be a solution to political problems, not even if it is done in self-defense of territory by a sovereign state or as part of a third party’s responsibility to protect civilians that are being attacked.” This statement rejected two reasons for entering into warfare. The first is the right of self-protection, which the Charter of the United Nations (UN) lists as the only exception to a complete ban on entering into warfare. The second is the concept of a ‘Responsibility to Protect’, which has been increasingly used since the '90s. That used to be referred to as ‘humanitarian intervention’.

### Intervention or sovereignty

In the debate revolving around this concept of a ‘Responsibility to Protect’, the proponents can usually be found in Western countries. Those countries point—and with good reason—to the duty of the international community to defend the rights of civilian groups threatened by violence. The opponents of this concept, including Russia and China, find it an unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country. The dilemma of having to choose between national sovereignty and international responsibility has been solved by the UN, which has decided, in agreement with their commission, that the protection of threatened civilian groups falls under the duties of national sovereignty. Nevertheless, if a national government is unable or unwilling to offer such protection, the international community could take over that responsibility. The discussion on how this should be done has by no means come to an end.

The interesting thing about the war in Georgia is that the traditional roles of the West and the East as champions of the right to intervene or the right to protect national sovereignty, respectively, were completely turned around. This strengthens the position of the skeptics, which holds that despite any ethical motives, both interventionism and sovereignty are primarily about self-interest *and* the estimation of one’s own power. A state or alliance that has confidence in its own military strength and power is more apt to be in favor of intervention than one that fears such a strategy, since that could jeopardize its own sovereignty and territorial integrity.



*Responsibility to Protect includes the protection of threatened civilian groups*

Photo: WPP

with regard to Kosovo. When this effort failed (due to resistance of Russia and China to the proposed resolutions), the Kosovo war started in 1999. The troubled situation of the Kosovar Albanian people was held to justify the intervention as well as the fact that the ultimate authority of the UN Security Council had been ignored; protecting an oppressed group of people was considered more important than the protecting the sovereignty of Serbia. During the Kosovo war, there was enormous criticism of the numerous civilian targets that were hit, including the bridge in Novi Sad, chemical factories in Pancevo, a television tower and the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. Both Russia and China firmly protested against the war, but they did not interfere in it. An important detail in this matter is the fact that Georgia sided with the NATO in this conflict, despite the fact that it had three areas of its own whose inhabitants were longing for autonomy.

After another decade of NATO military presence in Kosovo to keep the peace, but without any progress on a political level with regard to the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia (where some important political changes had taken place in the meantime), the status quo of an independent Kosovo had gradually developed. Early in

All in all, the choice of a particular strategy has little if anything to do with any distinction between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ values. To clarify this, it is very useful to compare the recent violence in Georgia with that of the Kosovo war of exactly a decade ago and which enlightened the whole debate on humanitarian interventions at that time. The similarities are striking, although the parties involved have changed roles.

### Kosovo

The violence and war in Kosovo had been preceded by ten years of Albanian resistance against a nationalistic Serbian government—a situation that Western countries had allowed to continue for years as the war in Bosnia had been demanding all their attention. In 1998, the NATO, through the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), tried to push Serbia into making concessions

2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence, despite Russian protests. A majority of Western countries formally recognized Kosovo's independence after that.

## Georgia

During the independence of Georgia in the early '90s, there had also been a longing for autonomy among the ethnic minorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. When violence erupted there in those days, Russian troops that were still present in the area interfered and ended the situation. This treaty, which included Russian, South-Ossetian and Georgian troops, was made under the surveillance of the OSCE. The tensions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia were overshadowed by the long-lasting wars in Chechnya that had demanded all the attention. Meanwhile, Georgia had come more and more under Western influences. During the most-recent elections, Saakasjvili played the nationalist card by promising to bring the separated areas once again under Georgian authority. In early August, 2008, he opened the attack. The very same night, Russia called together the UN Security Council, but the United States and Great Britain refused to support the proposed resolution that would call on all parties in the conflict to end the violations that were taking place. They argued that the violence perpetrated by Georgia was legitimate since it was targeted against a Georgian province. Subsequently, Russia decided to send a military force to South Ossetia (and later to Abkhazia) in order, as they claimed, to protect the people in these areas against the Georgian violence. Russia justified the presence of its military force there by way of the responsibility to protect and the need for human security.

In mid-August 2008, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in an interview with the BBC: "Above all, since the Georgian attacks are so severely brutal and inhumane. I don't expect South Ossetia to return to the negotiation table. It is ethnic cleansing, it's genocide. The most important goal is to protect the civilians of South Ossetia and to prevent new victims." The Russian minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, added one month later: "A nation's right to territorial integrity is based on the principle of respecting the right of self-determination and the development of all people in the territory. The current Georgian regime has not obeyed these international demands." There was major criticism about the excessive nature of Russia's response to Georgia, yet the NATO gave only verbal support to Georgia, despite numerous American military advisors being in that country.

After having expelled the Georgian troops from South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia acknowledged the independence of both of those states, though Western countries strongly objected to that. Russia nevertheless responded by pointing to the unilateral Western acknowledgment Kosovo's independence. After the deployment of an unarmed mission of EU observers in Georgia, Russia withdrew its troops, two months after the war began, from both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

## Separation movements

Both the Kosovo war nearly a decade ago and the Georgian war last year should be interpreted as violations of sovereign identity (albeit rather debatable), which has very little to do with 'the responsibility to protect'. The UN report on the responsibility to protect also warns that various separatist movements might misuse this concept. The question remains as to how the international community should deal with such claims of independence. Perhaps now it can finally be debated without either side making any moral claims, now that Russia and Western countries have demonstrated how good they are at trading positions when it comes to ideologies and moral values. When it comes down to it, however, self-interest will presumably once again prevail.



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## **Music's Power to Make Peace**

by **Laura Hassler and Michael Greenwald**

**M**usicians have long been allies of activists and peacemakers. From the American peace and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 70s, to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, to the “Singing Revolution” that led to Estonian independence in 1991, music—whether performed by professionals lending their names and talents to a cause, or sung spontaneously by masses of ordinary people demonstrating for their rights—has often played a major role in effecting social change.

In the last decade, two important developments have moved music's place in peacemaking to another level. Neurological and other scientists have produced evidence of music's inherent ability to heal trauma, reduce stress levels, and influence behavior. Meanwhile, in a parallel but largely unrelated development, musicians have started taking their skills and talents to places where war has raged and human beings are left damaged and isolated. Using skills and insights learned in the multicultural classrooms, stages and festivals of Western European cities, they have experimented with ways of engaging the power of music to connect, reconcile and heal. In war-torn cities, destroyed villages and refugee camps, they confirm on the ground what scientists study and report: that music offers unique possibilities to contribute to healing emotional wounds and building connections between people—the essential prerequisites for interpersonal reconciliation—as well as to creating or restoring intercultural bonds.

### **The Theory**

What gives music such special potential? Music's unique power is that it works on three levels simultaneously—the biological, the psychological and the social. Psychologists and neuroscientists suggest that music's origins lie deeply planted in our collective biological evolution. It is thought that the human capacity for empathy developed through pre-language, non-verbal systems of sound, communicating states of body and mind to the other, especially between mother and infant. As powerfully as music is shaped by culture, there is good evidence that culture is just as powerfully shaped by music. While aspects of this transactional relationship can be traced to our evolution as a species and the development of “human” culture, contemporary experience offers a vast number of examples of music's capacity to shape social values, mores and behavior.

### **Body**

Music has a direct and virtually automatic impact on our heartbeat, respiration rate, blood pressure and levels of excitation or relaxation. Music activates portions of the brain that control these autonomic functions. Music also activates the portions of the brain that control spinal motor systems. Thus, music can be used to energize an athletic team, physically relax and soothe a class of hyperactive teenagers and help people with Parkinson's disease achieve coordinated movement such as running or even dancing.

Eastern medicine teaches that life energy flows through the body and that disease is often the result of energy blockage caused by physical or emotional wounds. People who have suffered the traumas of conflict and war—physical injury, loss, displacement, exposure to abuse or torture—often exhibit disturbed breathing, upset metabolic functions, disrupted hormonal levels and other forms of physical stress and disease. Music—whether listened to or sung or played—has been shown to reduce these symptoms. Several scientists have demonstrated that tones sung by the human voice can disrupt cancer cells, ameliorate the adverse effects of chemo- and x-ray therapies, and, apparently, increase the probability of remission in some cancer patients. In all, music affects the body and, quite likely, has the power to heal the body in ways we are just beginning to explore.

### **Mind and emotion**

Music engages the areas of the brain that have to do with awareness of space and time. The ability to distinguish sounds, patterns of sound, rhythm, harmonies and musical structure—all of these cognitive skills are part of the musical experience.

Personal experience tells us that music—whether we sing or play it ourselves or listen to it—can evoke the entire range of human emotion, from joy to despair, from passionate rage to passionate love, from fear to heroism. And it can do so almost instantly, without the intermediation of language. Music therapy works because music helps people express feelings, memories, experiences and dreams that they are unable or unwilling to express in other ways.

***“Music speaks to another part of identity and allows the individual to explore her own complexity”***

Thus, music powerfully activates our intellectual and emotional selves and evokes in us a deeper and more integrated sense of identity in ways that are far more immediate than, and often unavailable through, language.

## Society

Music is one way in which a group may manifest its identity. A national anthem, a tribal chant, a school's alma mater, a military march, a ballad celebrating a cultural hero—through all of these, different groups identify and recognize membership. Musical genres also serve to identify members of different cultural groups—in general, most people who listen to hip-hop are different from most people who listen to classical music. In part this connection of music to group identity reflects the fact that a particular piece of music will evoke the same physical effects, the same emotions and the same ideas in many individuals from the same culture. And in part it reflects the fact that music stimulates recognition among listeners that their feelings and ideas are shared by others.

This recognition of shared feelings and ideas also can transcend group boundaries. At its most fundamental, it represents the opportunity for people to become aware that we are all part of the same group, the human species. In many music projects in many parts of the world, music's evocation of our common humanity serves as the basis for building—or rebuilding—bridges across the divides of political, historical, ethnic and cultural conflict.

Why does music sometimes “work” where dialogue fails? Where conflict has divided people along group lines—whether ethnic, religious or other group identifiers—individuals are defined by that



*Music helps people express feelings  
Photo: Lilian Peters*

which divides them from the other and become isolated, not only from the other, but also from much of their own complex selves. Dialogue and reconciliation projects that continue to define participants mainly by these single “labels”, bringing together Serbs and Albanians, Muslims and Christians, etc., may also reinforce this isolation from the complex self. Music speaks to another part of identity and allows the individual to explore his/her own complexity, while providing a different basis for relating to others. Connection with musicians from other regions can help break through geographic isolation, another frequent stifling result of conflict. Honing musical talents and skills can be a welcome challenge, an invitation to connect with teachers, role models and peers, an expression of both individuality and commonality and sometimes a key to a future career and the beginning of a path back to “normalcy”.

## The Practice

In collaboration with Dutch and international peace organizations, Musicians without Borders has established successful music projects in some of the most intransigent regions, where simple dialogue is still often not possible.

### Music school on wheels

In Eastern Bosnia, at the scene of Europe's worst genocide since World War II, the **Music Bus Srebrenica**, an initiative of Musicians without Borders (MwB), brings the joy of music to children in the towns, villages and refugee settlements. The “music school on wheels” travels to children in the now ethnically divided region, working through schools and community centers to delight hundreds of children every year with singing, dancing, drumming, learning to play simple instruments, producing shows and musicals. When a basis of trust among children, teachers and parents has been established, the Music Bus organizes special projects, productions and summer camps in neutral areas, bringing together children from different ethnic backgrounds to meet and work together as percussionists, actors or singers. MwB's Bosnian staff is now advising and collaborating in establishing a Music Bus for Palestinian children on the West Bank.

### Rock music in Kosovo

The city of Mitrovica in northern Kosovo was once a major center of rock music in the Balkans. Since the Kosovo war in 1999, Mitrovica is a divided city, with Serbs and Albanians living on opposite sides of the river Ibar. The once thriving multicultural youth music scene has been replaced by the nervous electronic beats and aggressive,

nationalistic lyrics of so-called turbo-folk. Musicians without Borders is cooperating with Community Building Mitrovica (CBM), the Dutch Fontys Rock Academy, and IKV-Pax Christi to establish the **Mitrovica Rock School** (MRS), offering instrumental, voice and theory lessons and band coaching to young musicians from both sides of the city. The MRS opened two temporary facilities for youth in North and South Mitrovica in October 2008. More than 70 students signed up immediately—and there is a long waiting list. While the young musicians are prevented from meeting in their own city, the MRS brings mixed groups out of the city at regular intervals for Summer School programs in neighboring Macedonia and didactic and organizational training for local staff and teachers. Meanwhile, a lively Internet exchange keeps the music crossing the divide until the musicians, themselves, are able to.

***"Some even said that hearing this music had given them the strength to go on with their lives"***

### *Singing with women in Bosnia*

In 2001 and 2002, Musicians without Borders sent a female vocal ensemble to Bosnia to perform a program of traditional Bosnian songs, as a gesture of solidarity and remembrance for women who had survived the Srebrenica disaster. The reactions were overwhelmingly positive—the Bosnian women who attended the concerts were deeply moved at hearing their own songs sung by foreign women in honor of their lost loved ones, and in recognition of the beauty of their culture. Some even said that hearing this music had given them the strength to go on with their lives. MwB workshop leaders were able to persuade women who had stopped singing and dancing years ago to create a dance together, expressing their daily lives. And MwB musicians played local tunes so temptingly that 40 women in a remote refugee camp joined in joyful folk dancing for the first time in years. MwB is currently preparing a joint project with women singers and conductors from Sarajevo and Tuzla, establishing regular women's singing activities in the Srebrenica region. An international team of women singers, dancers and therapists will spearhead the project, gradually turning it over to local musicians and teachers.

### *Voices of Peace in the Balkans and the Caucasus*

The May 24 celebration is the occasion for a new collaboration. MwB and the Women's Peacemakers Program, with extensive their networks in the Balkans, are both beginning to establish connections with women (activists/musicians) in the Caucasus.

Both the Balkans and the Caucasus have always been crossroads of many cultures. Both regions are marked by a colorful diversity of peoples, languages and art forms. In both regions, folk art, and particularly music, is a strong, binding factor in everyday life. Music serves a strong social function in community life, bears and transmits the stories and histories of the various cultures from one generation to another, and for many, represents and

expresses most strongly their bond to their land and culture.

The Balkans and the Caucasus have long traditions of "women's music" and specific styles of polyphonic singing. And in both regions, local and international geopolitical ambitions have pitted ethnic and religious groups against each other in violent clashes that have left many dead, wounded or displaced.



*Mzetamze an a capella vocal ensemble from Georgia*

*Photo: Mzetamze*

The Women's Peacemakers Program (WPP) and Musicians without Borders work through international networks, empowering teachers, trainers, leaders, and/or musicians working for reconciliation and healing in conflict regions. MwB and WPP will now bring women musicians and activists from the two regions together to explore possibilities of learning from each other and cooperating within our broader networks. For WPP, the project represents a first venture into the use of music for the empowerment of women peacemakers. For Musicians without Borders, the project offers the chance to align the power of music with the strategic empowerment of women in these fascinating, though troubled, regions.



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*For more information on Musicians without Borders, please visit the website: <http://www.musicianswithoutborders.nl/>*

*Photo: Frits de Beer*



*Photo: Musicians without Borders*



## **An Outside Perspective: An Interview with Kvinna till Kvinna**

by José de Vries

Since its inception in the early 1990s, in response to reports of the horrendous outrages to which women were systematically being subjected in the Balkans, the Swedish organization Kvinna till Kvinna has grown significantly, both in the size of its operation and in its geographical spread. The organization is now established in three conflict-affected regions. Following the Balkans, operations began in the Middle East in 2001 and in the South Caucasus in 2002. Its work today focuses on long-term development cooperation with women's organizations in all three regions. In 2002, the organization received the 'alternative Nobel Prize': the Right Livelihood Award. Kvinna till Kvinna works from a needs-based perspective and supports initiatives being undertaken by partner organizations in the areas concerned.

In order to explore the Balkans and the Caucasus from the perspective of an organization that works very closely with women's organizations in both regions, WPP spoke to the coordinators of the Balkans Desk (Lena Wallquist and Hanna Sällström) and the Southern Caucasus Desk (Christine Bender).

**Could you please elaborate a bit on the specific work you are doing in your region?**

### **The Balkans:**

We are currently working together with 50 women's organizations throughout the Balkans. We provide financial and moral support to those organizations. We support their organizational development, and we serve as a discussion partner for them. We contribute to their network building, both within the region and between regions.

We support a broad variety of organizations in order to support the whole women's movement in the Balkans. For instance, we work with organizations that support the political participation of women, that work to prevent violence against women, and that actively promote gender equality, Roma women, lesbian and gay rights, education, sexual and reproductive rights, gender studies, research and gender mainstreaming within universities.

In the past 15 years, with the Balkans moving from being a conflict into a post-conflict area and women's organizations becoming stronger, there has been a shift in the work that our partner organizations are doing. During and directly after the war, the work focused on relieving immediate needs, such as creating mobile clinics. Nowadays, there is less need for that, and the work focuses more on creating spaces where people can meet, share experiences and exchange strategies. This has led to more work being done across national borders.

There is also more emphasis now on awareness raising about and demanding respect for women's legal rights.

***"Nowadays, the work focuses more on creating spaces where people can meet"***

### **The Caucasus:**

At the moment, we are working together with 25 organizations in the Caucasus. We support organizations that focus on different themes such as violence against women, sexual and reproductive rights, health, women's rights and women's organizing and networking. We also work with organizations that provide education. Many women in the Caucasus were educated in the Soviet era and many lack the kinds of knowledge currently needed, such as bookkeeping, computer skills, English and leadership skills. We also work with organizations that focus on IDP problems and peace and reconciliation across borders. Our support is financial, but it can also be on a more strategic level, such as encouraging and supporting cooperation and networking and the improvement of the position of women on political levels.

For instance, one of the initiatives that Kvinna till Kvinna was involved in was a peace club set up by the Union of Wives of Invalids and Lost Warriors in Tbilisi and the Association of South Ossetian Women for Democracy and Human Rights in Tskhinvali to encourage a dialogue between South Ossetians and Georgians, including people who were forced to flee from their homes in South Ossetia and can no longer return. As they cannot meet in Georgia or South Ossetia, their first post-war meeting was held in Baku, Azerbaijan. They say that the war has further strengthened their conviction that women must play an active part in the peace process if the conflict is ever to be resolved. They continue with their peace efforts.

## From your experience, what can you say about the challenges that the women and women's organizations in these regions face?

### **The Balkans:**

Through our direct contact with the women activists, we learn about the challenges they face. For instance, they face a lot of *violence, threats and aggression*. This includes concrete violent actions, but also more subtle threats, such as hate speeches and aggressive speech. Unfortunately, such threats and violations are not being adequately dealt with by politicians. There is no legal enforcement that protects those women from those threats.

Another extremely important challenge in this context is the *strong relationship between political and economic structures and organized crime*. The structures of organized crime are extremely powerful and dangerous in the Balkans and they have played a major role in the wars in this region as well. We are not just talking about 'an ordinary fear of democratization processes' within those structures. The organized crime in the Balkans benefits hugely from the lack of democratization, and those same structures strongly resist the establishment of true democracy.

In the Balkans, there are many different actors involved in politics: local governments, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and a wide range of other European actors that are present in Kosovo. However, there is no clear division of roles and responsibilities, and that leads to a *lack of accountability and transparency from a citizen's perspective*: What are my rights and how can I demand them? Neither international nor national actors are sincerely interested in women's rights issues. All those actors have ignored women as potential participants in peace talks. Also, as the majority of parliamentarians are male, they lack any commitment to those topics. Formally, there are laws dealing with gender equality. However, no efforts are being made to truly implement those laws and nothing has really changed since they were passed. This has increased the feelings of doubt and insecurity among the women activists. They wonder why they would need those laws, if they don't bring forth any real change?

In some areas of the Balkans, customary *laws have been highly influential* in shaping the legal framework. In practice, formal laws are not so influential, since people refer to the traditional laws. For instance, in spite of the existence of laws, only a few of the men who violate women's rights are actually brought to court and convicted. If women demand their rights by referring to the formal laws, that can result in their being cast out from society.

### ***"The life of a woman activist is extremely demanding and challenging, as they are confronted with many prejudices and much resistance"***

Many women activists face *burn out and stress-related problems*. The life of a woman activist is extremely demanding and challenging, as they are confronted with many prejudices and much resistance. The women often have a huge workload, in addition to maintaining a paid job in order to survive. The majority of women accept this as 'being part of the package for an activist'. There is a real need to focus more on the burn-out symptoms that many women activists face, and we are working with organizations that do that.

The *lack of freedom of movement* due to complicated and time- and resource-consuming visa procedures is very challenging as well and results in a kind of isolation for women activists. The lack of outside exposure and a related increase of nationalist feelings does not do anybody any good. It makes it harder for people to develop their own views and perspectives.

In general, a minority group in a country—and especially a female member of this group—has less access to employment and education. This results in women being economically dependent on men, since they lack an income of their own, especially in the countryside.

Many women's organizations have *difficulties engaging younger activists*. The latter grew up during the war, when information was quite biased. The older activists have known other times as well, which nurtures their spirit for activism.

### **The Caucasus:**

Yes, the women's organizations face many challenges in their work for women's rights. For all the women's organizations in the South Caucasus, an important challenge is *the patriarchal society* that they are working in. This makes it much more difficult for them to be involved in higher political structures. In fact, the number of women

active at political levels is even decreasing. In order to get elected at higher political levels, one needs to have money for campaigning and to enjoy the trust of the society. Women are lacking both. The society, with its Soviet traditions, expects women to stay at home rather than be involved in politics. The lack of women in parliament leads to women's issues not being taken seriously. For instance, the domestic violence law was adopted in Georgia nearly three years ago, mainly due to international pressure. The men in parliament ridiculed this law rather than taking it seriously; they didn't understand the importance of the issue.

The *patriarchal nature of society complicates a feeling of solidarity among women*. To be elected for politics, women need support, especially from other women. However, both women and men are expected to support men for political positions rather than women. As long as women fail to realize and to understand that women should also be allowed to get more power, they are afraid of supporting other women who want to get involved in politics. Some organizations are currently working on this, actively lobbying for women to be involved at higher political levels. For instance, they try to form groups that actively support one woman.

Due to *the war and the violence*, people are afraid and have lost their sense of faith. They feel that their future is quite insecure. Many people have lost some hope in the future. Also, the regional work in the South Caucasus is complicated by the situation that women from the three countries and the breakaway republics are not able to meet at the same place within the region. This is not due to problems among the women themselves, but because the conflicts make it difficult for them to cross certain borders.

It is quite difficult for women to build and develop a career as they are *lacking opportunities* for doing that, especially in smaller places. In Tbilisi or Yerevan, the situation for women is a bit more progressive, as is usually the case in larger cities. For instance, many young women have had a good education, often even better than that of young boys. However, society expects women to stay at home and to marry at quite an early age. Men drive cars, but women are not expected to get a driver's license. We therefore support organizations that teach women how to drive, as well as those that specifically employ female drivers. Another example is related to public spaces: they are essentially for men. Some of the organizations we work with encourage women to demand their space in the public arena as well. In restaurants, for instance, and especially in smaller places, one hardly ever sees women alone; they are usually accompanied by men.

**Could you elaborate on how women's organizations are dealing with these challenges?**

### **The Balkans**

Women's organizations in the Balkans have existed for a long time already, and they have various strategies for dealing with the challenges mentioned above. One of the most obvious ones is to *increase their visibility*. In order to deal with the security challenges, women activists try to be very visible, find support for their work and link with other organizations, including international ones. This prevents that if something happens to them, it remains an unknown and silent case.

Many of the women activists we are working with are also *actively working on fostering dialogue between different ethnic groups and creating spaces for women to meet*. The spaces allow women to discuss with others and educate others about women's rights. They try to network and cooperate with women's groups from different backgrounds in order to strengthen their voices and lobby together. For instance, during the elections, all our partner organizations organized a campaign encouraging people to vote for women. The campaign was organized throughout Bosnia. Nevertheless, lobbying for laws is not enough to establish a change in women's life. That is why women activists are also actively working on promoting the implementation of laws and on *bringing cases to court*. The cases that are brought to court are documented and used later as jurisprudence.

***"To deal with the security challenges, women activists try to be very visible, find support for their work and link with other organizations, including international ones"***

In spite of all the challenges, women's activism has a long and strong history in the Balkans. Despite the challenges, the women endure, choosing activism as a way of life and accepting the hardships. This *endurance* can also be seen as another coping strategy.

### **The Caucasus**

In spite of the challenges that women's organizations face, we do see changes happening throughout the Caucasus as a result of their work. Such change only comes gradually, however, and it takes time. The women and the women's organizations need to be recognized more for the work they are doing. *Finding support* is

therefore one of the strategies the women's organizations use in order to deal with their challenges. Women activists are trying to find support among other activists, family members and international organizations. Another strategy that I think is important in the Caucasus is the increase and spreading of knowledge, since this contributes to change. In Abkhazia, for instance, it is common practice for women to be kidnapped and then forced to marry to the man who kidnapped them. Women often feel that they have to stay and can't do anything about it. However, if women knew before this happened that the practice was criminal and that they could refuse to marry, they might dare to leave and stand up for their rights. That's why I think it is extremely important that women are educated about their rights. In acquiring new knowledge, women will dare to take more of the space that is rightfully theirs. This contributes to change.

A change in mind-set is needed for both men and women if real change is to be established in society. When they don't stand up to traditional views of how women and men should be and are afraid to act differently from what society expects from them, women, too, contribute to the persistence of those views. I realize that this is difficult, since standing up might mean jeopardizing one's own reputation or being rejected by society.

**What do you see as similarities or differences between the Balkans and the Caucasus in terms of the position of women and women's organizations?**

### **The Balkans**

We see more *similarities* than differences when comparing the Balkans and the Caucasus. For instance, both regions are dealing with poverty, high levels of violence, corruption, strong feelings of nationalism, the lack of any freedom of movement, strong family roles, and the lack of real implementation of any laws protecting women's rights. In both regions, women activists are not taken seriously in their work, whether by political structures or the international community. Their work is not really recognized, despite its being crucial for establishing democracy.

***"The Balkans has developed into a post-conflict situation (with the effects that come after a conflict, such as depression and untreated traumas), whereas the Caucasus is still in the middle of an open conflict"***

In terms of *differences*, well, the women's movement in the Balkans has a longer history than the one in the Caucasus. In the Balkans, women were already organized in the '70s. The women's organizations in the Balkans have had more experience and are therefore more developed and matured. Also, the contexts in which both are working are different. The Balkans has developed into a post-conflict situation (with the effects that come after a conflict, such as depression and untreated traumas), whereas the Caucasus is still in the middle of an open conflict. This obviously influences the organizational development as well. For instance, it complicates meeting others across the dividing lines and building up initiatives for cooperation. In contrast, there is a quite well-established cooperation throughout the whole Balkan region.

### **The Caucasus**

Obviously, there are similarities in the backgrounds of both regions: they both have been communist areas and both have experienced wars. This common history could enhance cooperation, since the groups are apt to understand each other.

I haven't been to any of the countries in the Balkan region, so it is quite difficult for me to answer this question. I nevertheless have the impression through my work with some Croatian and Serbian trainers that women's organizations in the Balkans are more feminist and more radical. They have a longer history of working for women's rights, also because they have had international support for a longer time. They had the opportunity to strengthen themselves earlier on and to develop their feminist views and ideas. Women's organizations in the Balkans are more focused on cooperation and networking, I think.

Also, I think that the people in the Caucasus cling more strongly to their traditional views than people in the Balkans. Since independence, the security situation has decreased and people have become poorer. This has also resulted in a stronger emphasis on stereotypical roles for women and men: women are expected to stay safely at home and men are seen as the caretakers of the family.

**The celebration of May 24 organized by IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program and Musicians without Borders focuses on women peace activists and female musicians from the Balkans and the Caucasus, providing them an opportunity to share their experiences in peace building and reconciliation. Could you say anything about the role of culture (music and art) in those regions?**

### *The Balkans*

Yes, we think that art can play a major role in conveying important messages related to women's rights and peacemaking initiatives. For instance, in Serbia we cooperate with several organizations on producing public theatre performances that raise attention for these issues. Theatre can spread messages in strongly emotional ways. Another example is our cooperation with an organization in Bosnia that wants to set up a 'vagina monologues' theater piece there, which is connected to the war. In that play, women will talk about their sexuality and connect it to violations of sexuality. The audience will be invited to share their experiences as well. This is a powerful tool for healing the past and for enabling women to change and give a voice to their sexuality.

Cultural and street activists incorporate others ways of working than that of the traditional NGO structure. This might even involve more and younger women activists.

### *The Caucasus*

People in the Caucasus are very proud of their music and culture. We also notice that at the meetings we organize. I think music can play a major role in building bridges, creating common understanding and bringing divided people together.



*Lena  
Wallquist*

*The coordinators of the Balkans Desk (Lena Wallquist and Hanna Sällström) and the Southern Caucasus Desk (Christine Bender) of Kvinna till Kvinna.*

*For more information on Kvinna till Kvinna, please visit the website: <http://www.kvinnatillkvinna.se>*



*Christine  
Bender*



*Hanna  
Sällström*



## ***The Balkans and the Caucasus—Lessons Learned for Women Peacemakers and Civil Society Actors: The Global Fund for Women’s Experience in the Balkans and Caucasus Regions***

**By Angelika Arutyunova**

**B**eing a donor agency, and especially as a feminist donor, we are a part of the feminist movement and we play a very specific role in it. We have to be very careful not to push our agendas on the movement, but rather to formulate our agendas through dialogue and ongoing exchanges with the women’s movements. We have to be clear that by bringing resources to the regions, we are making choices and setting up priorities: who gets funding, how, and for what. We can influence the movement by those decisions. Our responsibility is to listen carefully to the women inside the movements and to let what they say guide us in making those decisions. With that in mind, the Global Fund for Women (GFW) planned two gatherings in 2006—in the Caucasus and Western Balkans—to learn who it is that we should be funding, for what, and how. The lessons that we have learned are informing our grant-making choices in the regions and can also be used by other donors and the movements themselves.

### **Gatherings:**

#### **The Caucasus**

In June 2006, the GFW organized an outreach trip to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, where we held one-day gatherings for the women’s groups within each country so they could meet with each other and discuss the priority issues facing women in their particular contexts. Following those national meetings, we all gathered in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, for a three-day regional grantee and advisor meeting that brought together eight Armenian, 15 Azeri, 33 Georgian women’s rights activists whose organizations have been supported by the GFW within the past five years.

The forum in Tbilisi, with this incredible group of women from the three countries, covered many issues concerning women’s rights in the region generally and in each country in particular. At times there were disagreements. For example, when we discussed sexual rights, there was a clear divide between the proponents of a more traditional, family-oriented role for women as peace- and homemakers and those who were advocating the right of women to choose their sexual partners, to have control over their own bodies, and not to allow men to manipulate their lives. Some of the disagreements and misunderstandings were transferred into learning opportunities, including one where Armenian and Azeri women had a chance to learn from the Georgian experience of lobbying the newly established government. It was inspiring to see a strong presence and hear voices of women with disabilities demanding inclusion in all aspects of discussions about women’s rights. *“Do not isolate us even more by giving us home-based jobs. Ask us what we want. Invite us to your seminars and trainings. But wait! Your offices are not equipped for disability access!”* This powerful statement brought silence and discomfort to the room, and now, looking back, I believe it brought ideas of real inclusion, support, collaboration, and sisterhood. No matter how many differences there were between the participants before the meeting and how much competition for funding all the groups have to deal with, by the end everyone agreed that each country of the region needs better laws about, more protection for, stronger inclusion of, and better visibility for women’s rights.

#### **Finding commonalities**

During the regional Caucasus meeting, we knew we could not avoid the conversation about the conflicts in the region, but we also knew we might not be able to have a healthy and productive discussion about it due to strong divisions among ethnic groups. As it was, we were taking a risk by bringing into the same room women from Armenia and Azerbaijan, Abkhazia and Georgia, knowing that for many of those women the still unresolved and fresh conflicts are very personal and stir up deep wounds. So, we decided to talk about other issues first, the specific issues that the women’s groups are working on: economic opportunities for women, domestic violence, disability rights, reproductive rights and choices, and political participation of women among others.

Once we had begun diving into these issues, the discussion gradually shifted from *“in Armenia our situation is like this”* and *“in Georgia we have it this way”* to one that centered more around sharing experiences and finding the commonalities in the way women’s rights are oppressed in all three states. There was no disagreement about the highly patriarchic systems—from the family level to the government—in which all three countries operate and which are at the root of most women’s rights violations. Women in all three countries have the exact same challenges in

terms of accessing political decision-making arenas, gaining access to highly paid male-dominated professions, having reliable women-centered and respectful sex education in society, and many other similar issues.

We also started noticing the participants' desire to learn from each other's experiences and a curiosity to know more about various strategies used in the neighboring countries to combat discrimination against women. The Georgian experience promoting the passage of the anti-domestic-violence law in the parliament sparked big interest among Armenian colleagues who wanted to learn the exact strategies used by Georgian women's rights NGOs so as to be able to adapt those to the Armenian context. We noticed differences in the strategies used from country to country. Strategies like public education, awareness, working with media and using communication tools, but also research and documentation are used by many of Georgian groups. Armenian groups specialize primarily in social services such as domestic-violence shelters and counselling. Public education and the distribution of information are the primary strategies used by Azeri groups. We could see that Georgian groups are on the level of closer collaborations with each other and other civil society actors due to over 40 percent of groups using networking and linking strategies in their work, while only about 15 percent of groups in Armenia and Azerbaijan use these strategies. With regard to another similarity among the countries, namely the generally low level of knowledge and awareness about women's rights among women themselves, women's groups in all three states are using the strategy of individual skills-building and training of women .

### The Balkans

The Global Fund for Women organized a two-day meeting in Dubrovnik, Croatia in October 2006. The selection of participants at the Dubrovnik meeting was rooted in our need to have a diverse and inclusive conversation. The GFW has had the privilege of funding over 100 women's groups in the region since 1990, but we did not believe that bringing all of them together in a meeting would be beneficial or constructive. This meeting brought together seven official advisors of the GFW in the region and 15 more feminist activists, academics, advocates, many of whom have been very helpful to the GFW as informal advisors in terms of our grant-making over the past years and some of whom are part of long-term grantee organizations who are in the vanguard of the women's movement in their countries. Other participants were new to the Global Fund but play a significant role in their countries in promoting women's rights or are specialized in particular issues or marginalized populations that our grant-making needs to include. While this group of people did not represent the entire region, it nevertheless brought a sampling of voices that enabled us to be conscious of the range of perspectives and voices that are important to our efforts to be a strong ally of the feminist movement in the Balkans.

***"This war is  
not  
in our names"***

### *Some challenges discussed*

The discussion centered around feminist ideology in the Balkans and internal and external challenges it faces. As at the Caucasus meeting, conflicts were not at the core of the discussions, but for completely different reasons. In the context in which these feminists operate, conflicts and their consequences had become the realities that have shaped feminist actions for over a decade. The majority of Balkan feminists did not split their sisterly understanding and human contact when Yugoslavia split. Serbian feminists were holding hands across the borderlines with Bosnian feminists and Kosova feminists, saying: *"This war is not in our names."*

During the meeting we asked many questions and came up with a set of concrete solutions and key recommendations that could be taken on by the feminist and women's movements and could be supported by donors. Much of the discussion had to do with nationalism and fundamentalism, with participants agreeing on the growing threat of traditional rightwing governments coming to power and religious fundamentalism taking over the society. We agreed on the strong need to build a resistance movement to this powerful ideological tendency in the Balkans. We further discussed the political participation of women and the movement as a whole. Participants agreed that it is not enough simply to have more and more political-awareness seminars and workshops. It is also not enough to get a woman into political office. Women's groups are feeling less radical because they are under pressure to work in collaboration with the government and to channel more women into politics rather than into civil society. Once those women obtain governmental posts, they become part of the system and are not trying to change it from within. There is a need to build stronger political resistance to nationalistic and patriarchic governments. *"We need to try to change the system rather than becoming a part of it."*

Many groups addressed the issues of post-war trauma and gender-based violence among women from war-affected communities. They identified the need to continue challenging the misperception that the effects of war belong to the past and to make people aware that many in the region are still suffering from trauma that manifests itself in the overwhelming problem of violence against women.

### Key strategies

We discussed strategies and actions that could affect social change and promote the women's rights and general human rights agenda in the region. We agreed that no single strategy is the most powerful or efficient, although a few key strategies could be used in combination:

❖ Participants prioritized **building coalitions** as one of the key strategies in achieving the goal of bringing women's rights issues to the forefront of the debate in the region. When setting agendas, we should build coalitions and networks on the existing experience rather than duplicating efforts made before. The coalitions should include minority voices and allow them to speak on their own behalf: diverse feminist voices—whether young, new or long-term in the movement—but also representatives of other movements (e.g. peace, environmental, youth, queer).

❖ Participants agreed that there is a great **need for research and for documentation** of the accomplishments of the feminist movement in the region. There was agreement that it would take specific types of research to make a change in the situation of women's rights in the Balkans. There was strong agreement that most social change cannot be measured by short-term research. *"Real feminist research takes time."* There must be a commitment to long-term research that intersects knowledge from academia, activists, and governments. Feminist-based research is needed in order to challenge gender-mainstreaming mechanisms as well as our own preconceived notions about tolerance and multiculturalism.

❖ Considering that **activist sustainability** was one of the key internal challenges that the movement is facing, participants made dealing with that issue a priority. They came up with few concrete recommendations to address burn-out problems: build requests for funding for retreats and salaries into project proposals; make sure that women activists pay more attention to their own bodies and learn to love themselves; build up a movement based on a consciousness of its history and in close collaboration between older and new generations of feminists in order not to repeat history and not to make long-term activists feel unnecessary and forgotten; build a stronger environment of solidarity; make sure the movement reflects on its achievements and celebrates its accomplishments.

After identifying priority issues, the participants tried to identify characteristics of players who can influence how those issues are addressed. Three major categories of player characteristics were identified: landscape and practices of donor agencies, dynamics and strategies of the women's movement itself, and collaborations with other civil-society actors.

### Dancing through the ethnic lines

The gatherings in the two regions highlighted the diversity of topics that contrast the Caucasus and the Balkans. But they also emphasized how the different interethnic dynamics may unite or divide a region and a movement. Those interethnic dynamics within women's rights organizing in the Balkans and the Caucasus, and the related complexities that donor agencies must keep in mind, are well illustrated by the culture of dancing, singing, and eating in the two regions. Besides the conference-room setting, both gatherings had a plethora of social events including long fabulous dinners and dancing parties. However, the differences in the acceptance across ethnicities were striking.



*Dancing through the ethnic lines*  
Photo: Global Fund for Women

As an Armenian who has spent most of her life in the Soviet and post-Soviet region, I have the privilege of understanding the cultural differences in the Caucasus intimately enough to notice the switch in music from Georgian to Armenian to Azeri and to observe the changes in the women who were dancing on the dance floor.

Armenian women's rights activists stood to dance only to Armenian songs, Azeris only to Azeri songs, and Georgians only to their own songs. Unplanned seating arrangements for the dinners naturally resulted in an Armenian table, an Azeri table, and a Georgian table.

Contrary to the experience in the Caucasus, women from the different Balkan States had no apparent ethnic prejudices when communicating with each other in social settings. Women from the occupier state of Serbia were embracing and dancing together with women from occupied and devastated Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The voice of a singing activist from Montenegro was joined and filled across the halls by an Albanian, a Kosovar, and a Bosniak. In the Balkans, women and women's groups have a history of working across ethnic lines from the early years of the conflict, and that reflects their level of comfort among each other and their shared feeling of oppression, be they Serb or Bosniak feminists.

The strong ethnic-identity stands taken by women's rights activists in the Caucasus directly determined the level of our ability to engage in cross-ethnic discussions. As a representative of a donor organization wishing to contribute to a strong regional and global women's movement, I saw it as my role during the meeting and the evenings to navigate between all of these amazing women and not to miss a single dance, whether Armenian, Azeri, or Georgian! By the third evening, the group succeeded in bridging these divides and had a dance floor full of all of the conference participants, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. Both the meeting itself and the dancing were great avenues for transforming these individual activists, enabling them to think and strategize outside the limitations of the conflicts. There was a hope that, by transforming individuals, the cross-ethnic communication may be further strengthened.

***"Women in both regions possess a wealth of knowledge and experience that they do not often share among themselves"***

### Lessons learned

The Global Fund for Women cannot possibly lay claim to any of the achievements of the women that were brought together in Dubrovnik or Tbilisi. We cannot claim any of the activities taken on by these women and their organizations before or after these gatherings. We can only hope that our financial support and our ideas of bringing them together contributed to their work and the development of their collaborative initiatives. We also hope that our strategies for supporting the initiatives created and developed by women themselves, which reflect their context and realities, can serve as an example and inspiration to other donor agencies that may consider adopting such an approach, one that keeps proving to be successful and very much appreciated by women's rights activists around the globe.

[1] Any event initiated, organized, funded, and orchestrated by a donor agency will have its disadvantages and must be viewed from a particular angle. The GFW had full realization and a feeling of responsibility knowing that all of these activists came to both of these gatherings primarily because they were selected and invited by one of their major donor agencies. Recognizing such a **power dynamic** is extremely important in terms of being realistic and humble about how far the dialogue can move and what kinds of ideas representatives, including solely the donor agency and donorfunded participants, can contribute. We must not forget the long history of donor abuse in both regions, with manipulation and priority switching year after year. Shifting their priorities to meet donor needs or losing their funding because they refused to follow donor shifts is something the majority of these groups have experienced and learned to navigate through and survive. Keeping that dynamic in mind, the topics that were communicated during the meetings required many follow-up discussions among the groups without the GFW's participation and intervention. Some of these discussions resulted in concrete programs such as inclusion of women with disabilities in all gatherings of women's rights groups in Georgia and Armenia.

[2] Some of the initiatives that we had hoped would come out of the Caucasus meeting failed to materialize. Our hope in bringing together women of different ethnic groups and countries that were in active or "frozen" states of conflict in the Caucasus was to **encourage them to build alliances** and to work across the ethnic and state lines. Among the women who were present at the Regional Caucasus grantee meeting there have been no attempts since the meeting in June 2006 to come together and to collaborate in addressing the conflicts in the region. This is indeed a humble reminder to us, donors, that if the groups are not ready and willing, we cannot move the agenda according to our own priorities and plans.

[3] There is a strong need for **cross-sector collaboration**. Feminist movements cannot work in isolation from larger peace movements, doing parallel work but not together. Also, the discrimination within the women's rights movements against anyone who is "different" or more radical—as in the example of queer persons in the Caucasus or women with disabilities not being a part of the larger women's rights discussions but instead being pushed into a

corner to discuss “their own issues”—cannot continue as it is presently. There must be full inclusion of different voices from all players in the human-rights community in the region in order to not have a fragmented movement that is open for attack from opposition forces that are much better organized and more united.

[4] An important conclusion that was drawn during both outreaches is that women in both regions possess a wealth of knowledge and experience that they do not often share among themselves. Endless attempts from organizations and donors in the West and the North to bring external knowledge into the regions about ways to address human rights or peace-building efforts will likely not be as successful as the sharing of the **experiences and knowledge within and between** these two regions that share similar histories and cultural experiences. Many donors and activists have initiated internal exchanges over the past few years that have been demonstrated to be very successful and empowering experiences for women in the regions.



*Angelika Arutyunova is Senior Program Officer for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).*

*For more information on the Global Fund of Women, please visit their website:*

<http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/>



## Education and Training for Active Non-violence

By Isabelle Geuskens

As part of its education and training program, the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) supports non-violence training, whether by providing women's organizations and groups with seed funding for their peace initiatives, linking them to non-violence trainers and resource people, or providing training materials on the topic.

In 2008, WPP supported two peace initiatives from women's organizations based in the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Georgia.

### Women's Alternative, Republic of Serbia

The organization Women's Alternative, based in Sombor, Serbia, aims to empower women by supporting their initiatives and make Serbian society more aware of and sensitive to the need to establish gender equality, women's rights, and a culture of non-violence.



Map of Sombor municipality  
Photo: Wikipedia

The administrative center of the West Bačka District of Serbia, the municipality of Sombor is inhabited by a multi-ethnic population of approximately 120,000 residents, 60% of whom live in the surrounding villages. The inequality of women is a major problem in this region of Serbia and correlates to a number of factors including low levels of education, high levels of unemployment, and strong patriarchal values. All these things add to the vulnerability of women. Domestic violence is very present in daily family life but is rarely addressed as it is considered to belong to the private sphere.

The Women's Alternative (WA) was founded in 2001 to address the difficult situation of women through projects such as a Women in Crisis Helpline (an SOS hotline) and a Counseling Centre for women that offers psychological support, medical advice, and legal assistance. It has also created several initiatives to raise public awareness of the rights of women.

### The Women's Alternative's Training of Trainers (ToT) Program

In late February, 2008, WPP supported the Women's Alternative's Training of Trainers (ToT) Program. A group of twelve women, representing different villages and a variety of backgrounds, participated in an intensive three-day ToT on gender-sensitive active non-violence. The aim of this ToT

was to create a pool of women trainers who could increase rural women's awareness about gender and active non-violence, inform them of the need for the civic participation of women, and empower them to assert their rights.

Upon conclusion of the ToT, the twelve trainees formed training pairs. Each pair conducted six trainings at the rural departments of their municipality, reaching out to the following villages: Bački Monoštor, Gakovo, Kljajićevo, Kolut, Ridica and Stapar. In total, 87 women were reached through these follow-up trainings.

The evaluation of the project showed that the trainees felt empowered from the exchange of knowledge, as well as through the networking that resulted from the ToT. They indicated that the training had changed their perceptions and attitudes about the position of women in society and their estimation of the importance of achieving gender equality. They mentioned specifically how the training had helped them to recognize and act against violence, making them aware of their own responsibility in creating a safe and non-violent atmosphere in the villages. This was also reflected in their actions, with trainees continuing to organize meetings at their own initiative on the topic of gender and violence in their villages.

The training also turned out to have an immediate positive impact at both the individual and the community levels. During the ToT, participants were informed about the village of Stapar's Rural Council, a unique committee that deals with local cases of conflict and violence. This Council consists of three members with experience in

negotiating and solving crisis situations. Although this body has no formal power, it is often used as a first step in coming to an agreement between two conflicting sides. Over the years, the Rural Council has been effective in solving local conflicts and has become the most important moral institution in the village. Their exposure to this Council motivated the ToT trainees to create similar initiatives in their own villages. Since the ToT, three rural women's groups have been established—Nade in Bački Monoštor, *Women's Space* in Riđica, and *Gakovcancka* in Gakovo—through which the ToT participants are working for the empowerment of women in their respective communities. One trainee became political active after the ToT and was recently elected into the local Sombor assembly.

On a personal level, one of the participants indicated how the training has empowered her to address a very difficult family situation involving an uncle who was very violent towards his wife and who also had a drinking problem. After a long series of unsuccessful attempts to solve the situation, most of the family members had given up, feeling they could not change it. After the training, she decided to give it another attempt and visited her uncle and aunt to discuss the situation. She was able to reach out to them; currently the uncle is taking part in a therapy group in order to deal with his aggression and drinking problems.

As a follow-up to the project, the Women's Alternative is planning to continue its communications with the municipality's rural departments to further rural gender empowerment. As a result of the networking resulting from the trainings, the WA expects to initiate new village activities aimed at women's empowerment and fighting violence.

#### Contact details:

Women's Alternative, Trg Koste Trifkovića, 2/1, 25000 Sombor, Republic of Serbia, Tel.: +381 25 27-321, +381 63 7 693 020. Email: [jacamiro@eunet.yu](mailto:jacamiro@eunet.yu)

#### *Women's Center, Republic of Georgia*

During the first half of 2008, WPP supported the training series "The Strength of Non-violence for Women" organized by the Women's Center based in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia.

The Women's Center was established in 1996 as the International Fund of Medical Women, and changed its name to Women's Center in 1999. The activities of the Women's Center focus on issues such as women's health and the protection of women's rights. The Center also offers judicial services and educational and awareness-raising programs on domestic violence, trafficking and the role of women in peacebuilding.

The conflict between Georgia and Russia over the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia is a pressing problem which further destabilizes the region. To deal with these issues, the Women's Center advocates for the need to implement peacebuilding skills to prevent further outbreaks of violent conflict, and, in particular, to involve women in nonviolent conflict prevention and conflict transformation.

During the initial meetings in South Ossetia, involving local community members and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who were living in Tbilisi, the women expressed their wish to take part in peace negotiation processes. They requested that skills-building seminars be held and peacebuilding working groups be established in the conflict regions, where the women and children are most heavily concentrated.

#### *The Strength of Non-violence for Women*

As a result, the Women's Center initiated the 2008 training series "The Strength of Non-violence for Women" with the local communities in a few towns of the conflicted region of South Ossetia: Kurta, Tamarasheni, and Achabeti. The three-day training series was attended by IDPs and civil-society agents from Tbilisi, among others. The training series focused on raising awareness of the need for the active participation of women in society and of women's rights, gender equality, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. It also aimed to form a Regional Women Peacemakers Group that would continue to work in the region, building partnerships with NGOs, governmental bodies, and regional institutions. The training series specifically addressed skill-building for intercommunal dialogue, non-violent responses to conflict, reconciliation, women's peace leadership and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

The project trained a total of 77 women (47 women in South Ossetia and 30 IDPs from South Ossetia who were based in Tbilisi). The Center's initiative was broadcast extensively on local and national TV, and several trainees continue to work on the topics within their respective communities. In addition, additional funding was sought to publish the book *Implementation of Peaceful Initiatives: Skills and Strategies for Action*, which was published in Georgian and Ossetian.

Nonetheless, as a consequence of the August 2008 military conflict, it has become increasingly difficult to further develop the activities of the Regional Women Peacemakers Group, as parts of the territory where the trainings were held have been put under heavy military control, with many people leaving their homes as IDPs. Currently over 160,000 people have been registered as IDPs, most of them women and children. At this moment, the Women's Center is working closely with these IDPs from South Ossetia in an effort to continue its peace work. The current lack of funding is interfering with the Center's possibilities for reaching out to the South Ossetian region.

**Contact details:**

Women's Center, 75 Vaja -Phavela Ave., Tbilisi 0168, Republic of Georgia, Tel: +995 32 536940 / 314656. Email: [grc@access.sanet.ge](mailto:grc@access.sanet.ge) Website: [www.womancenter.org.ge](http://www.womancenter.org.ge)



*Isabelle Geuskens is IFOR's WPP  
Program Manager*



## **Suggestions for Funders**

**By José de Vries**

- 📌 The African Women's Development Fund supports African women's groups working on the issues of women's rights, peace, HIV/AIDS and women's economic empowerment in Africa. Grants range from USD 1,000 to USD 25,000.

Contact: Yiyiwa St., Achimota Forest, Abelenkpe, Accra, Ghana

Tel: +233 21 780 477, Fax: +233 21 782 502.

Email: [grants@awdf.org](mailto:grants@awdf.org)

Web: [www.awdf.org](http://www.awdf.org)

- 📌 The A.J. Muste Institute accepts proposals for grassroots non-violence projects (up to USD 2,000) from groups anywhere in the world that have small budgets and little or no access to mainstream funding sources.

Contact: 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012, USA

Tel: +1 212 533 4335, Fax: +1 212 228 6193

Email: [info@ajmuste.org](mailto:info@ajmuste.org)

Web: [www.ajmuste.org](http://www.ajmuste.org)

- 📌 The Astraea International Fund for Sexual Minorities accepts proposals for projects to defend and promote the human rights of lesbians and other sexual minorities. It has funded over 168 organizations in 42 countries, including labor organizing in Chile and job training in Namibia.

Contact: 116 East 16th St., 7th floor, New York, NY 10003, USA

Tel: +1 212 529 8021, Fax: +1 212 982 3321

Email: [info@astraeafoundation.org](mailto:info@astraeafoundation.org)

Web: [www.astraeafoundation.org](http://www.astraeafoundation.org)

- 📌 The Ford Foundation is a resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide. Its goals are to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation and advance human achievement.

Contact: 320 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel: +1 212 573 5000, Fax: +1 212 351 3677

Email: [office-of-communications@fordfound.org](mailto:office-of-communications@fordfound.org)

Web: [www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org)

- 📌 The Global Fund for Women funds women's groups that advance the human rights of women and girls. Grants range from USD 500 to USD 20,000.

Contact: 222 Sutter Street, Suite 500, San Francisco, CA 94108, USA

Tel: +1 415 248 4800, Fax: +1 415 248 4801

Email: [gfw@globalfundforwomen.org](mailto:gfw@globalfundforwomen.org)

Web: [www.globalfundforwomen.org](http://www.globalfundforwomen.org)

- 📌 The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports work on ecology, democracy, solidarity and non-violence. The Foundation's Feminism and Gender Democracy Institute organizes events around women, peace and security, and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Contact: Schumannstr. 8, 10117 Berlin, Germany

Tel: +49 30 285 34-0, Fax: +49 30 285 34109

Email: [info@boell.de](mailto:info@boell.de)

Web: [www.boell.de](http://www.boell.de)

- 📌 The International Fellowship of Reconciliation's (IFOR) Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) supports women's peace initiatives and non-violence training by providing financial support, linking women's peace groups to trainers and resource people, and/or providing training materials. The WPP also provides small travel grants to enable women peace activists to attend trainings, courses and conferences abroad. Please note that the WPP's headquarters in the Netherlands supports initiatives from the following regions: The Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, the Pacific, and Latin America.

Contact: IFOR's WPP Headquarters: Spoorstraat 38, 1815 BK Alkmaar, The Netherlands.

Tel: +31 72 512 3014, Fax: +31 72 515 1102

Web: [http://www.ifor.org/WPP/networking\\_regionaldesks.htm](http://www.ifor.org/WPP/networking_regionaldesks.htm)

- 📍 The WPP Africa Regional Desk, hosted by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and based in Ghana, supports initiatives from the Africa region.  
 Contact Africa Regional Desk Coordinator - Women Peacemakers Program - West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP): P.O. Box CT 4434, Cantonments, Accra, Ghana.  
 Tel: +233 21 221318, Fax: +233-21-221735  
 Email: [edzathor@wanep.org](mailto:edzathor@wanep.org)
- 📍 The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) supports women's groups throughout Asia, the Pacific and indigenous Australia, working on issues of women's economic empowerment and access to decision-making (including issues of peace and security and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325). Grants may be up to AUD 15,000.  
 Contact: PO Box 64, Flinders Lane, VIC 8009, Australia  
 Tel: +61 396 5055 74  
 Email: [iwda@iwda.org](mailto:iwda@iwda.org)  
 Web: [www.iwda.org](http://www.iwda.org)
- 📍 The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust accepts proposals from groups in the UK and Europe, Northern Ireland and South Africa (KwaZulu Natal only). Proposals may deal with issues promoting racial equality, nonviolent conflict resolution, the culture of peace, or conscientious objection to military service.  
 Contact: The Garden House, Water End, York YO30 6WQ, UK  
 Tel: +44 190 462 7810, Fax: +44 190 465 1990  
 Web: [www.jrct.org.uk](http://www.jrct.org.uk)
- 📍 Mama Cash supports pioneering women's groups around the world that are fighting for women's human rights, peace and economic justice. No micro-credit services or loans are possible.  
 Contact: Eerste Helmersstraat 17 III, PO Box 15686, 1001 ND Amsterdam, the Netherlands  
 Tel: +31 20 689 3634, Fax: +31 20 683 4647  
 Email: [info@mamacash.nl](mailto:info@mamacash.nl)  
 Web: [www.mamacash.org](http://www.mamacash.org)
- 📍 PeaceFund Canada supports groups around the world that are working for non-violence and peace education.  
 Contact: 145 Spruce St., Suite 206, Ottawa, ON K1R 6P1, Canada  
 Tel: +1 613 230 0860, Fax: +1 613 563 0017  
 Email: [pfcan@web.ca](mailto:pfcan@web.ca)
- 📍 Tewa funds projects in Nepal that work for sustainable development and the empowerment of women.  
 Tel: +977 1 557 2654 / 557 2659  
 Email: [info@tewa.org.np](mailto:info@tewa.org.np) or [tewa@mail.com.np](mailto:tewa@mail.com.np)  
 Web: [www.tewa.org.np](http://www.tewa.org.np)
- 📍 The Open Society Institute (OSI) aims to shape public policy to promote democratic governance, human rights and economic, legal and social reform. Its International Women's Program (IWP) also uses grant-making to promote and protect the rights of women and girls around the globe by supporting organizations which are active in the area of reducing discrimination and violence against women, strengthening women's access to justice and increasing women's role as decision-makers and leaders.  
 Contact: 400 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019, USA  
 Tel: +1 212 548 0600, Fax: +1 212 548 4600  
 Web: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women>
- 📍 Women's Hope Education and Training Trust (WHEAT) is a national women's fund to support grassroots women's groups working on community development through education in South Africa.  
 Contact: PO Box 13641, Mowbray 7705, Cape Town, South Africa  
 Tel: +27 21 762 6214, Fax: +27 21 797 2876  
 Email: [info@wheattrust.co.za](mailto:info@wheattrust.co.za)  
 Web: [www.wheattrust.co.za](http://www.wheattrust.co.za)
- 📍 The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) provides financial and technical assistance in four areas: reducing women's poverty, ending violence against women, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, and gender equality. UNIFEM has 15 regional offices and two country programs.  
 Contact: 304 East 45th St., 15<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10017, USA  
 Tel: +1 212 906 6400, Fax: +1 212 906 6705

Web: [www.unifem.org](http://www.unifem.org)

📌 V-Day provides funding and organizes fundraising events for women's groups across the world that are working to stop violence against women. The organization co-sponsors an international anti-violence resource guide at [www.feminist.com](http://www.feminist.com).

Web: [www.vday.org](http://www.vday.org)

📌 WomanKind Worldwide works with partners in 14 countries to empower women. It does not accept unsolicited proposals. Inside the UK, it campaigns to stop sexual bullying in schools.

Contact: Development House, 56-64 Leonard St., London EC2A 4JX, UK

Tel: +44 20 7549 0360, Fax: +44 20 7549 0361

Email: [info@womankind.org.uk](mailto:info@womankind.org.uk)

Web: [www.womankind.org.uk](http://www.womankind.org.uk)

📌 Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights supports women's human rights defenders with rapid response grants and participates in advocacy and research.

Contact: 3100 Arapahoe Ave., Suite 201, Boulder, CO 80303, USA

Tel: +1 303 442 2388, Fax: +1 303 442 2370

Email: [urgentact@urgentactionfund.org](mailto:urgentact@urgentactionfund.org)

Web: [www.urgentactionfund.org](http://www.urgentactionfund.org)

NOTE: Requests from Africa may go directly to Urgent Action Fund-Africa, PO Box 53841-00200, Nairobi, Kenya.

Tel: +254 20 2731 095, Fax: +254 20 2731 094

Email: [info@urgentactionfund-africa.or.ke](mailto:info@urgentactionfund-africa.or.ke)



*For more suggestions for funding bodies, please have a look at our website:*

<http://www.ifor.org/WPP/resources.htm>



## **Suggestions for Resources**

*By José de Vries*

### **Organizations:**

#### **International Gender Policy Network**

The International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) is a membership-based, non-governmental organization that was established in the autumn of 2005 to strengthen and foster the impact of the woman's movement on policymaking and to ensure the sustainability of women's movements in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. For more information, please visit: <http://www.igpn.net/about-igpn.php>

#### **Network of East-West Women**

Founded in 1991, NEWW is an international communication-and-resource network supporting dialogue, information exchange, and activism among those concerned about the status of women in Central and Eastern Europe, the Newly Independent States, and the Russian Federation. NEWW coordinates research and advocacy that supports women's equality and full participation in all aspects of public and private life. For more information, including how to subscribe to their newsletter, please visit: <http://www.neww.org/>

#### **International Crisis Group**

Crisis Group's work in the Balkans presently spans Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia. Since beginning work in Bosnia in February 1996, Crisis Group has built up a sound track record in the Balkans, being seen as an independent voice and a source of influential new policy ideas. Crisis Group's Caucasus project started in 2003.

For more information, including access to reports, please visit: <http://www.crisisgroup.org>

#### **Institute for War & Peace Reporting**

IWPR builds democracy at the frontlines of conflict and change through the power of professional journalism. IWPR programs provide intensive hands-on training, extensive reporting and publishing, and ambitious initiatives to build the capacity of local media. Supporting peacebuilding, development and the rule of law, IWPR gives responsible local media a voice. For more information, please visit: <http://www.iwpr.net/>

#### **Heinrich Böll Foundation**

The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the development of democratic civil societies worldwide. A particular focus of the Foundation's work is the promotion of sustainable development. Other goals that guide the Foundation's activities include overcoming patriarchal structures of domination and supporting conflict management and peace-promotion measures in crisis areas. For more information, please visit: [http://www.boell.be/en/web/index\\_77.html](http://www.boell.be/en/web/index_77.html)

### **Reports:**

#### **Advancing Gender Equality – Using CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325**

*By UNIFEM*

The purpose of this training module is to build the capacity and awareness of gender-equality advocates in government and civil society in the Southern Caucasus to advocate for and to support the implementation of CEDAW and UNSC Resolution 1325. To read the full report, please visit: [http://www.unifem.org/resources/item\\_detail.php?ProductID=84](http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=84)

#### **To make room for changes – Peace strategies from women organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

*By Kvinna till Kvinna*

The report highlights the connection between women's participation, an independent civil society and sustainable peace and democracy. The situation is not unique; the pattern is the same in most conflict-affected regions throughout the world. The report describes women's organizations' concrete strategies to create a democratic and peaceful society, in urban as well as rural areas. It shows what support and acknowledgement from the international community means for civil society. But the report also highlights problems that arise when international actors take over and marginalize national and local organizations.

To read the full report, please visit: <http://www.kvinnatillkvinna.se/article/3058>

#### **Stronger Women, Stronger Nations: 2007 Kosovo Report**

*By Women for Women International*

Together with the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) and the American University, Women for Women International created this report to raise awareness about the connection between women's economic,

social and political participation and long-term peace and stability in Kosovo. To read the full report, please visit: [http://www.womenforwomen.org/global-initiatives-helping-women/files/8254\\_Kosovo\\_Report\\_Spreads.FINAL\\_000.pdf](http://www.womenforwomen.org/global-initiatives-helping-women/files/8254_Kosovo_Report_Spreads.FINAL_000.pdf)

### **Is Peace Possible? Women PeaceMakers in Action**

*By the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice*

This publication seeks to bring the course of global and local politics into sharp focus through the lives of women who stand up as individuals for humanity. It introduces some of the work and life experiences of 20 women who are taking on the seemingly impossible to move toward peace with justice. To read the full report, please visit: <http://peace.sandiego.edu/events/conferences/wpm/2007/IsPeacePossibleSummit.html>

### **Democracy on Rocky Ground: Armenia's Disputed 2008 Presidential Election, Post-Election Violence, and the One-Sided Pursuit of Accountability**

*By Human Rights Watch*

This 64-page report details the clashes between police and protesters in Armenia's capital, Yerevan, on March 1, 2008, in the wake of the disputed February 2008 presidential polls. It also documents the ill-treatment of individuals detained in connection with the violence, and lack of comprehensive investigation and accountability for excessive use of force on March 1 and in its aftermath. The report is based on more than 80 interviews carried out over three research missions in Armenia in 2008 and 2009. To read the full report, please visit: <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/02/25/democracy-rocky-ground-0>

For more information on Human Rights Watch, please visit their website: <http://www.hrw.org/>

### **Georgia/Russia: Civilians in the line of fire: The Georgia-Russia conflict**

From the onset of the five-day war between Georgia and Russia in the self-proclaimed republic of South Ossetia in August 2008, the conflicting parties failed to take necessary measures to protect civilians from the hostilities. In this report Amnesty International raises concerns that serious violations of both international human rights law and international humanitarian law were committed by all parties, both during the course of the conflict and in its aftermath. To read the full report, please visit: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR04/005/2008/en>

### **Weblogs:**

#### **Kakanien Revisited**

This weblog is a forum for discussion on the political and social processes linked to EU integration in the Western Balkans. It would also like to facilitate in the formation of a virtual network of researchers on this topic. For more information, please visit: <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/weblogs/see-eu/>

#### **Pushing the limits**

In the exhibition *Pushing the limits*, activists in conflict areas describe their situation and what they would like to change. On this blog, activists from the Balkans, the South Caucasus and the Middle East continue to describe their daily lives. For more information, please visit: <http://www.pushingthelimits.se/english/>

#### **Global Voices Online**

Global Voices is a thriving, vital component of the global media environment, helping individuals and media professionals around the world gain access to the diverse voices coming from citizen media. It bases its coverage on the words, images, and videos of ordinary people across the globe who use the Internet to communicate. For more information, please visit: <http://globalvoicesonline.org/>



## **Suggestions for Actions and Solidarity**

**By José de Vries and Merle Gosewinkel**



### **Listen, discuss and learn: Get to know the needs and struggles!**

- Find groups (through the Internet, e.g. use Google) in your own country that are actively working for peace in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Contact them and ask them how you could assist them. Inform them about this year's May 24 initiative.
- Listen to girls and young women in your community who come from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Talk with them about any challenges they face as a migrant in your community. Talk with teachers and youth leaders about ways you can support them in creating a safe and empowering environment.
- Invite women from different sides of a conflict in your community to come together in order to explore ways to reduce tensions within the community or neighborhood.
- Invite local women's groups to your work, organization or school to speak on how women can contribute towards a culture of peace. Invite a speaker from an organization from the Balkans and/or the Caucasus region to talk about their work.
- Get in touch with migrant groups from the Balkans and the Caucasus to discuss possible ways of working together.



### **Educate and encourage others!**

- Educate women peacemakers about UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Distribute copies of the Resolution during meetings and events. Translations of the Resolution are available in several languages, including languages spoken in the Balkans and the Caucasus (those can be downloaded from <http://www.peacewomen.org/1325inTranslation/index.html>).
- Invite women from both regions who live in your community to local schools to speak about their experiences during conflict (after checking if they feel comfortable with this, of course).
- Make a special effort to reach out to girls: talk with Girl Scouts/Guides or other girls' groups about how war and peace affect girls. Share an action with them, such as writing a letter to a government official or to women and girls in one of the groups listed in this pack.
- Encourage your school and community libraries to display (e.g. on May 24) books on topics such as women peacemakers from the Balkans and the Caucasus, violence against women, or women as decision makers, or books that were written by such women.
- Educate yourself about the situation in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Join a support group that focuses on resolving the conflicts in these areas, or invite a speaker from one of the regions to talk to your organization or religious group about the human costs of the violence.
- Translate and reprint articles from this pack to educate others about the issues (but please do credit the pack and don't forget to send us a copy!).
- Encourage groups to include ending violence against women in their agendas and events and to increase their support for women working for peace in the Balkans and the Caucasus.
- Create awareness in your community by holding marches and demonstrations for peace that call for a public commitment to end violence. Carry posters, banners, etc. that contain clear messages and demands for your local/national government.
- Encourage your religious leaders to speak out in support of peace and women's rights.
- Ride public transportation on May 24 and distribute information to passengers about the work of local peace groups. Include telephone numbers of peace organizations and organizations that work to empower women and girls.
- Inform your networks (your organization, place of worship, school, labor union or work place) about May 24 and possible solidarity actions for women peace activists.
- Educate yourself and the groups you belong to about the military recruitment of girls and boys. Order the leaflet *Make Our Schools Military-Free Zones* from American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) at: [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)



### **Organize something!**

- Hold a gathering to write legislators on topics your community is concerned about, such as ending violence against women, supporting women's sexual and reproductive rights or promoting the participation of women in leadership positions.
- Encourage others to reflect by organizing an essay contest. Themes could include: creating peace in the Balkans and the Caucasus or the steps that governments should take to ensure the participation of women in decision-making on security issues. Specifically request essayists to include recommendations as to how your city, state/provincial or national government can further promote a culture of peace.

- Organize a festive celebration for peace on May 24 and invite speakers from the Balkans and the Caucasus to take part.
- Hold a fundraising event to support a local peace / women's group from the Balkans and the Caucasus.
- Organize a public panel discussion, a demonstration, a festival or a film viewing to highlight women's work for peace. Focus particularly on women from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Invite women decision makers, women leaders from different ethnic and religious groups and women entrepreneurs to speak about the role of women in stopping violence.
- Invite members of your community to write a personal reflection, such as stories, poems or songs, on violence against women during conflict. Try to inform a wider audience, e.g. by posting it online, sending it to your local newspaper or asking a local TV station to broadcast it.
- Organize a dinner for May 24 and invite women from the Balkans and the Caucasus living in your community to share their experiences.
- If you are working on peace issues and/or women's rights, consider inviting someone from the Balkans, or from the Caucasus, to come and intern with your project for six months. Look for a grant to provide them with a stipend and housing. Consider sending someone from your group to live and work with an organization in the Balkans or the Caucasus.
- Organize a special worship service for women peacemakers and collect money there for a women's project in the Caucasus or the Balkan region.

### **Make use of interactive media and communication!**

- Write letters of support and emails on May 24 to the groups profiled in this year's pack to express your solidarity for their work.
- Twin your group or network with a women's peace group in the Balkans or the Caucasus. Exchange emails or talk to them via Skype to learn more about what they are doing for peace in their countries. Inform your networks/media of their work.
- Create a website about what women are doing for peace and justice in your community, or link your existing site to ones listed in this pack.
- Make a film about women's work on peace in the Balkans or the Caucasus and place it on YouTube.
- Create an online discussion forum where women from the Balkans and the Caucasus can post and discuss their stories.
- Issue a statement or press release, or write a letter to the editor of your favorite newspaper or magazine, to mark May 24, International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament. Call for more attention to what women in the Balkans and the Caucasus are doing for peace.
- Issue a press release rating your legislators on their efforts to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325.



## **International Directory of Women's Peace Groups 2009**

The following is a global list of women's organizations specifically working for peace. It is not fully comprehensive; we are aware that there are many other such groups, as well as many organizations that do some peace-women activities among other tasks. Please contact the IFOR's WPP secretariat with any suggested additions or corrections.

### **BALKANS**

#### **ALBANIA**

Albanian Woman Federation  
Email: [fgsh@icc.al.eu.org](mailto:fgsh@icc.al.eu.org)

Independent Forum of Albanian Women  
Myslym Shyri Str.71  
Tirana, Albania  
Tel: +355 42 272 68 or +355 42 283 09  
Fax: +355 42 283 09

Women's Center Tirana  
Rr. "Myslim Shri" P.54, Shk. 1, Ap.3  
P.O. Box 2418  
Tirana, Albania  
Tel/Fax: +355 42 236 93  
Email: [edi@women-center.tirana.al](mailto:edi@women-center.tirana.al)  
Email: [tina@women-center.tirana.al](mailto:tina@women-center.tirana.al)

#### **BOSNIA – HERZEGOVINA**

Women to Women Sarajevo  
Association "Žene Ženama"  
Derebent 41  
Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina  
Tel: +387 33 219 640 or  
+387 33 214 673  
Email: [zene2000@megatel.ba](mailto:zene2000@megatel.ba)  
Web: <http://www.zenezenama.com.ba/eng/index1.html>

#### **CROATIA**

Be active Be emancipated (B.a.B.e.)  
Ilica 16  
10000 Zagreb, Croatia  
Tel/Fax: +385 1 466 3666  
Tel: +385 1 466 2606  
Email: [babe@babe.hr](mailto:babe@babe.hr)  
Web: [www.babe.hr](http://www.babe.hr)

Center for Women War Victims  
Kralja Držislava 2/1  
10000 Zagreb, Croatia  
Tel: +385 1 455 11 42  
Fax: +385 1 455 1128  
Web: <http://www.czzzr.hr>  
Email: [cenzena@zamir.net](mailto:cenzena@zamir.net); [vesnaka@zamir.net](mailto:vesnaka@zamir.net)

Women's Action Rijeka  
Blaža Polića 2/II  
51000 Rijeka, Croatia  
Tel/Fax: +385 51 33 73 90

### **KOSOVO**

The Kosova Women's Network (KWN)  
C-2 II/8 Hajdar Dushi Str.  
10000 Prishtina, Kosova  
Tel: +381 38 245 850  
Email: [info@womensnetwork.org](mailto:info@womensnetwork.org)

### **MACEDONIA**

National Council of Women of the Republic of  
Macedonia (UWOM)  
Vasil Gorgov bb, Baraka 4;  
"11 Oktomvri" 17  
P.O. Box 571  
1000 Skopje, Macedonia  
Tel: +389 2 3134 390  
Fax: +389 2 3238 184  
Email: [sozs@mt.net.mk](mailto:sozs@mt.net.mk)  
Web: [www.sozm.org.mk](http://www.sozm.org.mk)

### **MONTENEGRO**

Montenegrin Women's Lobby  
Hercegovacka 17  
81000 Podgorica, Montenegro  
Tel: +381 81232 232  
Fax: +381 81230 572  
Email: [mzenskilobi@hotmail.com](mailto:mzenskilobi@hotmail.com)

### **SERBIA**

Autonomous Women Center  
Autonomni ženski centar  
Tiršova 5a  
11000 Beograd, Serbia  
Email: [azc@azc.org.rs](mailto:azc@azc.org.rs)

Reconstruction Women's Fund  
Rekonstrukcija Ženski fond  
Slavica Stojanovic, director,  
Vlajkovićeveva 15,  
11000 Beograd, Serbia  
Tel: +381 11 3241 399  
Fax: +381 11 3222 751  
Email: [office@rwwfund.org](mailto:office@rwwfund.org); or  
[slavica.stojanovic@rwwfund.org](mailto:slavica.stojanovic@rwwfund.org)

Women in Black  
Jug Bogdanova 18/5  
11000 Beograd, Serbia  
Tel/Fax: +381 11 2623 225  
Email: [stasazen@eunet.yu](mailto:stasazen@eunet.yu)  
Web: [www.zeneucrnom.org](http://www.zeneucrnom.org)

## CAUCASUS

### ARMENIA

Ajakits/Helping Hands  
Garegin Nzhdeh St, 223/028  
Gyumri, Armenia  
Tel: +374 31 234 506  
Email: [ajakits@shirak.am](mailto:ajakits@shirak.am)

Center for Gender Studies of Democracy Union  
17 Nalbandian Street, Apt. 4  
375010 Yerevan, Armenia  
Tel/Fax: +374 2 5656 80  
Email: [root@shahin.arminco.com](mailto:root@shahin.arminco.com) or  
[gulnara@iom.arminco.com](mailto:gulnara@iom.arminco.com)

Democracy Today  
40 Toumanian Street, Apt. 6  
Yerevan, Armenia  
Email: [gulnara.shahinian@gmail.com](mailto:gulnara.shahinian@gmail.com)

Women's Resource Center (Shushi)  
2 Varanda St.  
Shushi, Nagorno-Karabakh

Women's Resource Center (Yerevan)  
34 Zarubyan St.  
Yerevan, Armenia  
Tel: +374 93 99 22 44  
Email: [armwomen@namag.com](mailto:armwomen@namag.com)

### AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan Council of Transcaucasus Women Dialogue  
108 Samed Vurgun St, Apt 71  
Baku, Azerbaijan  
Tel: +994 12415 672  
Fax: +994 12415 672  
Email: [Rsafaral@azeurotel.com](mailto:Rsafaral@azeurotel.com)

Azerbaijan Women and Development Centre  
3/6 S Rustanov St., kv 65  
370001 Baku, Azerbaijan  
Tel: +994 12 927 920  
Fax: +994 12 672 139  
Email: [elmira@awdc.baku.az](mailto:elmira@awdc.baku.az)

Gender and Human Rights Research Union  
15 Huseyn Djavid Av, Apt. 10  
370073 Baku, Azerbaijan  
Tel: +994 12 393 747  
Email: [phillaw@lan.ab.az](mailto:phillaw@lan.ab.az); [orrena.mirzazadeh@box.az](mailto:orrena.mirzazadeh@box.az)

Institute for Peace and Democracy  
Rasul Rza Street, 9  
370000 Baku, Azerbaijan  
Tel: +994 12 983 173  
Email: [root@ipd.baku.az](mailto:root@ipd.baku.az)

## GEORGIA

Caucasus Women's Network (CWN)  
Address: 10 L. Asatiani Str. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
380105 Tbilisi Republic of Georgia  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 38,  
380179 Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia  
Tel: +995 32 988 695  
Fax: +995 32 988 695  
Web: <http://www.cwn.ge/en/en.php>

Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi"  
11, Gugunava St.,  
384000 Kutaisi, Republic of Georgia  
Tel/Fax: +995 33 171 933  
Email: [sokhumi@sanetk.net.ge](mailto:sokhumi@sanetk.net.ge), [alla.sokhumi@sanetk.net.ge](mailto:alla.sokhumi@sanetk.net.ge)  
Web: <http://www.fundsokhumi.ge>

Women's Centre  
75, Vaja-Phavela Ave.  
380186 Tbilisi Republic of Georgia  
Tel: +995 32 233 299 / 536 940 / 314 656  
Fax: +995 32 233 299  
Email: [grc@access.sanet.ge](mailto:grc@access.sanet.ge)  
Web: [www.womancenter.org.ge](http://www.womancenter.org.ge)

Women of Georgia for Peace  
20 Ateni St., Apt. 29  
380079 Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia

### INTERNATIONAL

IFOR Women Peacemakers Program  
Sporstraat 38  
1815 BK Alkmaar, The Netherlands  
Tel: +31 72 512 3014  
Fax: +31 72 515 1102  
Email: [j.devries@ifor.org](mailto:j.devries@ifor.org)  
Web: [www.ifor.org/WPP](http://www.ifor.org/WPP)

International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)  
Development House  
56-64, Leonard Street  
London, EC2A 4LT, UK  
Tel: + 44 207 065 0870  
Fax: + 44 207 065 0871  
Email: [contact@iansa.org](mailto:contact@iansa.org)  
Web: <http://www.iansa.org/index.htm>

International Peace Bureau  
41, rue de Zurich  
1201 Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel. +41 22 731 6429  
Fax +41 22 738 9419  
Email: [silvi@ipb.org](mailto:silvi@ipb.org)  
Web: [www.ipb.org](http://www.ipb.org)

International Women's Tribune Centre  
777 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017, USA  
Tel: +1 212 687 8633  
Fax: +1 212 661 2704  
Email: [iwtc@iwtc.org](mailto:iwtc@iwtc.org)  
Web: <http://www.iwtc.org>

Nobel Women's Initiative  
430-1 Nicholas St.  
Ottawa, ON, K1N 7B7, Canada  
Tel: +1 613 569 8400  
Fax: +1 613 241 7550  
Email: [info@nobelwomensinitiative.org](mailto:info@nobelwomensinitiative.org)  
Web: <http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/>

NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security  
777 UN Plaza, 8th floor  
New York, NY 10017, USA  
Tel: +1 212 682 3633, ex. 3121  
Fax: +1 212 682 5354  
Email: [info@womenpeacesecurity.org](mailto:info@womenpeacesecurity.org)  
Web: [www.womenpeacesecurity.org](http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org)

War Resisters' International Women's Working Group  
5 Caledonian Rd.  
London, N1 9DX, UK  
Tel: +44 20 7278 4040  
Fax: +44-20-7278 0444  
Email: [info@wri-irg.org](mailto:info@wri-irg.org)  
Web: [www.wri-irg.org/wwghome.htm](http://www.wri-irg.org/wwghome.htm)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)  
1, rue de Varembe,  
CP 28  
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 919 70 80  
Fax: +41 22 919 70 81  
Email: [info@wilpf.ch](mailto:info@wilpf.ch)  
Web: [www.wilpf.int.ch](http://www.wilpf.int.ch) (Contact WILPF for a complete list of national sections)

Women Living under Muslim Law Africa & Middle East  
Coordination Office  
Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et les Lois au  
Senegal (GREFELS)  
PO Box 5330  
Fann, Dakar, Senegal  
Email: [grefels@gmail.com](mailto:grefels@gmail.com)  
Asia Coordination Office  
Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre  
PO Box 5192  
Lahore, Pakistan  
Email: [sgah@sgah.org.pk](mailto:sgah@sgah.org.pk)  
Website: [www.shirkatgah.org](http://www.shirkatgah.org)  
International Coordination Office  
PO Box 28445  
London, N19 5NZ, UK

## ANGOLA

Angola Women's Network  
Avenida Hoji ya Henda no. 21  
1 Dt. Luanda, Angola  
Tel: +244 2 34 95 13  
Email: [redemulher@netangola.com](mailto:redemulher@netangola.com)

## AFGHANISTAN

Afghan Women's Network  
Kabul office:  
Main Road, Tahmani Watt (Street 9)  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
(Near to Russian Embassy – Moy Mobarak Bus Stop)  
Tel: +93-70286598, +93-799689079  
Contact person: Wazhma Popal, Office Manager  
Email: [awnkabul\\_q@yahoo.com](mailto:awnkabul_q@yahoo.com) ,  
[awn.kabul@gmail.com](mailto:awn.kabul@gmail.com)  
Jalalabad office:  
Street #1, Ali Kahil Road  
Jalalabad, Afghanistan  
(Across from Sehat-e-Ama Clinic).

Tel: +9370602040  
Peshawar office:  
House #86, D/2 Abdara Road.  
Peshawar, Afghanistan  
Tel: +92915704928  
Fax: +9291850760  
Web: [www.afghanwomensnetwork.org](http://www.afghanwomensnetwork.org)

Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan  
PO Box 374  
Quetta, Pakistan  
Tel: +92 30055 41258  
Email: [rawa@rawa.org](mailto:rawa@rawa.org)  
Web: [www.rawa.org](http://www.rawa.org)

## ARGENTINA

Madres de Plaza de Mayo  
Hipólito Yrigoyen 1584  
1089 Buenos Aires, Argentina  
Tel: +54 4383-0377/6430  
Fax: +54 4954-0381  
Email: [madres@madres.org](mailto:madres@madres.org)  
Web: [www.madres.org](http://www.madres.org)

## AUSTRALIA

Women for Peace  
PO Box 2111  
Lygon Street North, Brunswick East,  
Melbourne 3057, Australia  
Tel: +61 (03) 938 61071,  
Email: [womenforpeace@live.com.au](mailto:womenforpeace@live.com.au)  
Web: [www.womenforpeace.org.au](http://www.womenforpeace.org.au)

## AUSTRIA

Frauen für den Frieden  
Luis Zuegg Str. 14  
6020 Innsbruck, Austria

## BARBADOS

Women and Development Unit  
Elaine Hewitt  
c/o University of West Indies  
Cave Hill Campus, St. Michael, Barbados  
Tel: +1 809 436 6312  
Fax: +1 809 436 3006

## BELGIUM

Rassemblement des Femmes pour la Paix (RFP)  
Coordination Femmes OSCE  
Rue Antoine Dansaert 101  
BP 15, 1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32 2 512 6498  
Fax: +32 2 502 3290  
Email: [Femmes.Paix@amazone.be](mailto:Femmes.Paix@amazone.be)

## BOUGAINVILLE

Bougainville Inter Church Women's Forum  
PO Box 209,  
Buka, Bougainville  
Tel: +675 973 9983  
Fax: +675 973 9157

## BURMA

Burmese Women's Union  
PO Box 52, Mae Hong Son  
58000 Thailand  
Tel/fax: +66 53 612 948  
Email: [bwumain@cscoms.com](mailto:bwumain@cscoms.com)

Shan Women's Action Network  
PO Box 120, Phrasing Post Office  
50250 Chiang Mai, Thailand  
Web: [www.shanwomen.org](http://www.shanwomen.org)

Women's League of Burma  
Email: [wlb@womenofburma.org](mailto:wlb@womenofburma.org)  
Web: [www.womenofburma.org](http://www.womenofburma.org)

## BURUNDI

Association des Femmes Burundaises pour la Paix  
Deputé à l'Assemblée Nationale  
PO Box 5721,  
Bujumbura, Burundi  
Tel: +257 223 619  
Fax: +257 223 775

## CAMBODIA

Alliance for Conflict Transformation  
#69 Sothearos Blvd, Tonle Bassac, Chamkarmorn  
Postal Address: PO Box 2552  
Phnom Penh 3, Cambodia  
Tel/Fax +855 23 217 830  
Web: <http://www.actcambodia.org/>  
Email: [actadmin@online.com.kh](mailto:actadmin@online.com.kh)

## CANADA

Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group  
c/o Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee  
1 Nicholas St., no. 1216  
Ottawa, ON, K1N 7B7, Canada  
Tel: +1 613 241 3446  
Fax: +1 613 241 4846  
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