

## الثورة مستمرة



The revolution continues...

# Annual Report 2012

## Women Living Under Muslim Laws

<sup>1</sup>Photograph above: Women march for reform to the Personal Status Law, Egypt 1951.

Photograph below: International Women's Day march in Cairo, Egypt. March 2012. Photograph: Sally Zohney.

# Women's Rights *are* Human Rights



## WLUML mission statement:

‘Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) is an international solidarity network that promotes human rights and gender equality for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws said to be derived from Islam. It works in partnership with women’s organisations and individuals to strengthen movements for social justice and the advancement of women’s human rights.’

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<sup>2</sup> International Women’s Day march in Cairo, Egypt. March 2012. Photograph: Sally Zohney.

# Annual Report 2012

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# WLUML Highlights for 2012

- The WLUML website received 13,092,296 hits in 2012, averaging 1,091,025 a month; of the total amount 1,061,176 were unique visitors.
- The publications *Electoral Politics* and *WLUML Dossier 30-31: The Struggle for Secularism in Europe and North America* by Marieme Hélie were downloaded, respectively, the following times: 115,208 and 1,970,589.
- The most popular pages of our website were *Knowing Our Rights, Talaq-i-Tafwid: The Muslim Woman's Contractual Access to Divorce: An Information Kit*, and the publication, *Control and Sexuality*, by Ziba Mir Hosseini and Vanja Hamzic.
- Between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2012, the Violence is Not Our Culture website had 42,046 visits, of which 36,458 were new visitors.
- Visitors accessed the website from all around the world – in 2012, we received hits from approximately 180 different countries.
- WLUML took significant action to support women human rights defenders over 2012, issuing and circulating at least 35 urgent action appeals and solidarity support messages.
- We reached a wide audience with our newsletters this past year – the number of WLUML news subscribers were 2283.
- Our social media presence grew considerably in 2012. WLUML now has 2029 Facebook stands at 2029 fans and 768 twitter followers.

# Purpose and History

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) was born in 1984 in response to three urgent cases in which women were being denied their rights through reference to laws said to be 'Muslim'. The network has now spread to over 70 countries. WLUML was founded and is led by women's groups and individuals with mainly Muslim backgrounds based in the Global South.

WLUML's purpose is to strengthen women's individual and collective struggles for equality and access to their rights, especially within Muslim contexts. WLUML has played a critical role for women who either lack information regarding their official legal rights – such as those derived from personal status laws and civil codes – or have limited access to information that might enable them to challenge the validity of either customary or state law. This knowledge gap is reinforced by a deliberate policy of misinformation, exacerbated by the existing monopoly and control over matters purportedly relating to Islam. WLUML also creates a space for creativity and the exchange of ideas. It is in essence, a 'think tank' for activists from across the world.

Over the last 25 years, the growing power of extremist groups organised around identity politics has been a major cause limiting the range of choices available to women living in Muslim majority contexts. These disempowering forces continue to exert increasing pressure on people, especially women, to embrace ever more narrow definitions of self, such that their multiple identities based on gender, citizenship, class, religion or ethnicity are reduced to one single, imposed identity; a reduction to the 'right' identity. These forces can silence dissenting voices, both religious and secular, often through the use of violence, actual or threatened. The result is isolation, fragmentation and weakening of those who dissent.

WLUML has worked over the years to break the silence and isolation by developing a transnational network for information, solidarity and support, giving women access both to information and to each other. With the increasing threat posed by politico-religious fundamentalists, WLUML's support for women who are mounting resistance to these forces has become even more crucial. It has 25 years of experience in bringing together the collective strength and voices of women and gathering different analyses and strategies to advance women's human rights and gender equality within Muslim contexts.

# Relevance today

The Middle East – along with many other Muslim contexts - is alive today with the sight of women rising. The ‘Arab Spring’ and its aftermath bring challenge and opportunity to the lives of the many brave and committed women fighting for equality and gender justice in charged and changing circumstances. We live in a time of urgent action, vibrant contrast and dynamism. *What new challenges do we face?*

Women worldwide now confront a range of conservative movements that focus their energies on controlling and marginalizing women, defining our roles and identities and constricting our range of autonomous choice. The Muslim Brotherhood recently attempted to undercut years of development of women’s human rights, acting publicly against the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The Western Sahel underwent a severe political crisis linked to the rise of conservative movements in the Middle East, and in Mali, rebel militants stoned an unwed couple to death, engaged in widespread sexual violence, and instituted further brutal punishments.

In Saudi Arabia, women’s ‘guardians’ – their husbands and male family members – recently began to receive SMS messages from the Ministry of the Interior, tracking women when they attempted to travel outside the country. In Pakistan, courageous young education activist Malala Yousafzai was targeted by militants intent on silencing her. In Aceh, Indonesia, scores of women were penalized this year simply for straddling motorcycles. In Afghanistan, nearly half of all incarcerated women are in detention for ‘moral crimes’, which includes running away from repressive or dangerous circumstances at home. In Sudan, the brutal punishment of stoning continues to be prescribed and/or enforced disproportionately against women. Equality of women is absent from the new Egyptian constitution, and sexual harassment is on the rise. And in Tunisia, a young woman gang raped by police was later counter-charged with ‘indecent.’

Yet women human rights defenders in Muslim contexts today are not victims or passive spectators to these events – they are feisty, politically aware, mobilized, creative, linked-up and active in the struggle against conservative forces. Working with these women on the ground in the Global South and Diaspora, tapped into the vital and variable spirit of women’s grassroots activism worldwide, WLUML is a transnational solidarity network uniquely suited to our times.

WLUML does not simply consult with local women’s groups and activists: it is made up of these powerful young voices. We are awake both to the diverse strategies and circumstances that exist today in Muslim contexts, and to the shared experiences, analyses and tactics available to women who live under Muslim laws.

Today’s WLUML is about praxis - a potent mix of theory and activism, of innovative action in the street and online, and rooted critical thinking that propels our subversive strategies to further women’s human rights. It is about sustainable activism in the wake of ever increasing challenges.

WLUML is more relevant today than ever. At the vanguard of modern women's activism, we are bringing networked activism into the digital and post-Arab Revolution age.

# Looking forward

As WLUML steps into 2013, we are embarking on a bold new strategic review, consolidating our unique knowledge and experience over the past three decades and moving forward to redouble our efforts to achieve gender justice around the globe.

Our Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation (WELDD) programme has successfully tapped into the needs of young activists worldwide for training and capacity building on transformative feminist leadership to better equip them for their struggles for political change. This year WLUML will hold a series of multi-country workshops in the Middle East and West Africa, bringing together and empowering the next wave of women's rights leaders.

Digital activism is a critical tool for today's women's rights leaders, especially in environments where women human rights defenders face persecution, repression and a lack of security. Accordingly, WLUML will launch its new web-portal this year. A feminist leadership development resource centre, the WELDD portal will act as a hub of knowledge, interaction and debate around issues of political leadership. We also have several bold new ventures planned for WLUML online – watch this space.

Further, in 2013 WLUML will highlight and tackle culturally-justified forms of violence against women (CVAW), such as forced marriage and stoning, via partner developed, nationally based advocacy campaigns. WLUML will push for tangible change through our international campaign on CVAW. Stop Stoning Women Now launches this year at the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, building momentum towards a UN resolution on stoning as a form of violence against women and towards eradication of this continuing form of torture and cruel and inhuman treatment.

WLUML's Violence is Not Our Culture program will also actively promote women's right to live free of CVAW through such broad-based advocacy as the global 16 Days of Violence Against Women campaign, research and the promotion of international human rights mechanisms. We will also forge new alliances and expand and develop our network through our West Asia program. WLUML is on the forefront of mapping the region's major actors in women's rights, and will continue to consolidate our links and work together with local partners towards our shared goal of equality.

Finally, our Publications programme will continue from strength to strength. In 2013 WLUML will bring you *Women's Charters*, co-authored by UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women Rashida Manjoo and WLUML Board member Professor Homa Hoodfar. *Dossier 32: Sexuality in Muslim Contexts* will be made available to activists to upload, and WLUML will bring you cutting-edge analysis of women's rights in the public sphere with *The Politics of Women's Sport*. In keeping with our international ethos, we will continue to translate our publications into several languages, including *Dossier 29: Mechanisms and Structures to Promote and Protect*



*Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality; Dossier 30-31: The Struggle for Secularism in Europe and North America, Knowing Our Rights; and Great Ancestors: Women Claiming Rights in Muslim Contexts.*

# Governance and Structure

## Governance

WLUML is a registered charitable organisation (in England and Wales), Charity number: 1144519. WLUML is also a limited by guarantee 'not-for-profit' company, registered Company number: 04117440.

## 2012 Board Members

There are currently nine Board members who serve in a voluntary capacity. They are responsible for the organisation's governance. The Board is assisted by an advisory group, the International Advisory Council who are drawn from women human rights and women's rights activists from across the Global South. The Council has a current membership of 17 women.

### Board Members:

Zarizana Abdul Aziz – Chairperson (Malaysia)

Fatou Sow – International Director – Honorary (Senegal)

Djingarey Maiga (Mali)

Doaa Abdelaal (Egypt)

Faizun Zackeriya (Sri Lanka)

Homa Hoodfar (Iran/Canada)

Isatou Touray (Gambia)

Karima Benyonnue (Algeria/ USA)

Katayoon Hoodfar - Company Secretary (Iran/United Kingdom)

## Structure: International Coordination Office (ICO)

WLUML's regular services, advocacy, and communications are run from the International Coordination Office in London. The ICO provides coordination and resource support for global and multi-country campaigns and programmes.

During 2012 the International Coordination Office staff team consisted of: International Director (based in Senegal), Deputy Director, Communications and Advocacy Officer, Iran Programme Coordinator, Finance and Administration Officer, and Harvard Law Public Service Fellow.

In addition WLUMML contracted freelance staff, based largely outside of the UK. Among these were Culturally-Justified Violence Against Women (CVAW) Coordination consultants for the WELDD programme, a West Asia consultant and a Funding and Resources consultant.

WLUMML has retained its strong volunteer base that supports its Publications work and the Farsi website and publications in particular. A total of eight volunteers and interns assisted WLUMML in 2012.

## Regional Coordination Offices (RCOs)

WLUMML has two regional coordination offices, housed in independent organisations in Africa and Asia: GREFELS in Dakar, Senegal and Shirkat Gah in Lahore, Pakistan. These sister organisations facilitate WLUMML regional networks, and provide administrative and programme support to the network and projects as required.

GREFELS is a feminist research and advocacy project. It is non-denominational and not-for-profit. Its purpose is to conduct research on women's rights, to issue action alerts, conduct advocacy and raise support for human rights. GREFELS, as a member of the WLUMML network, hosts the regional coordination office for Africa and the Middle East (AME). As such, it is responsible for activities and tasks related to networking, data collection, and the provision of information and solidarity actions within these contexts. GREFELS is a non-officio member of WLUMML's Advisory Council. RCO-AME regional activities are described in a separate section.

Shirkat Gah is a multifaceted not-for-profit organisation that works towards capacity building for women on both an individual level, supported by outreach partners across Pakistan, and at a strategic level to ensure good governance and policy making nationally.

Shirkat Gah, as a member of the WLUMML network, hosts the regional coordination office for Asia. As such, it is responsible for activities and task relating to networking, data collection, and provision of information and solidarity actions within these contexts. Shirkat Gah is also a non-officio member of WLUMML's Advisory Council. RCO- Asia regional activities are described in a separate section.

# 2012 Activities

Our work has four Strategic Objectives, to:

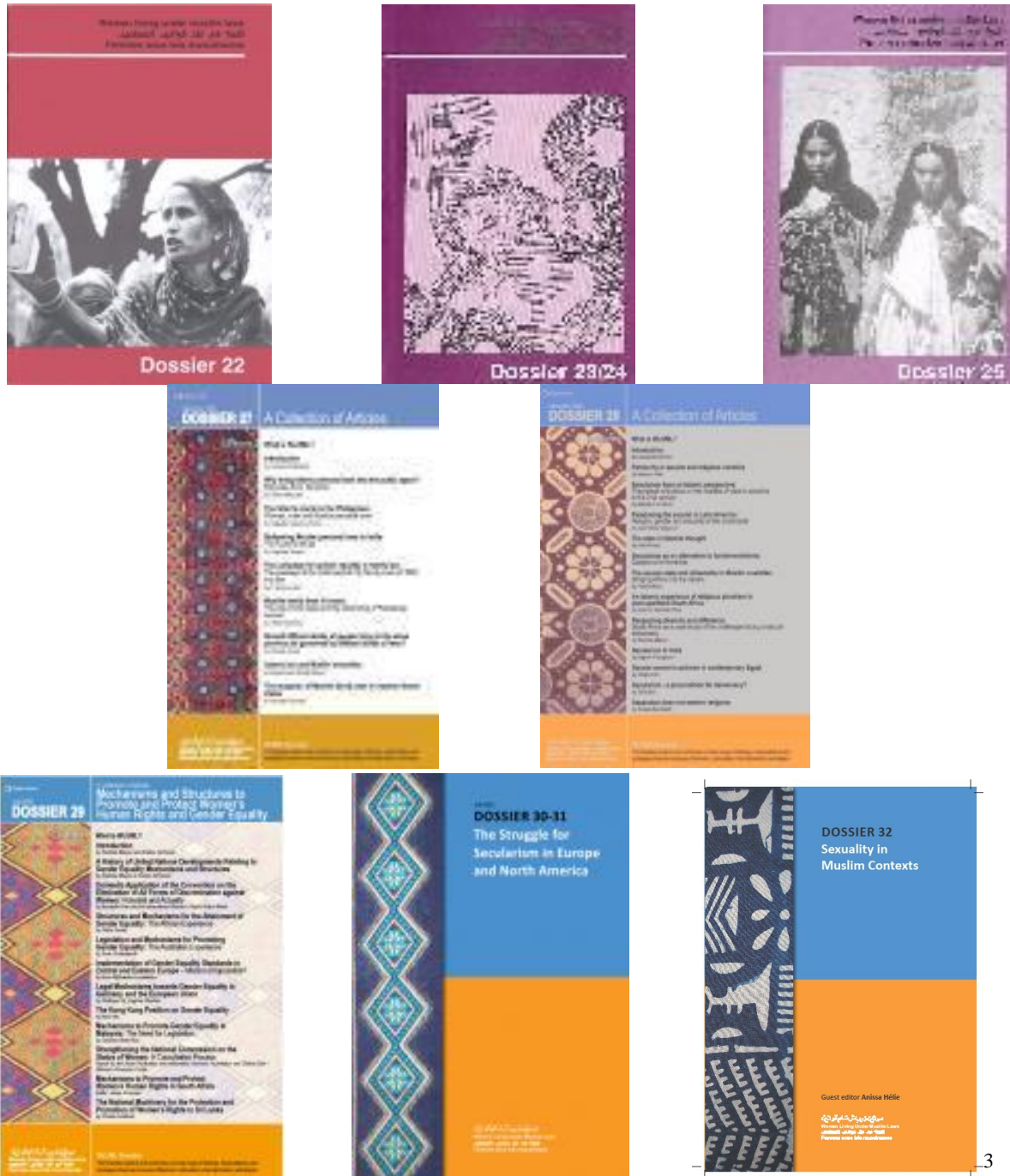
**GENERATE** new analyses contributing to women's struggles in Muslim countries and communities regarding WLUML critical issues, and provide a platform for a broad range of networkers' voices and analyses.

**OFFER** a visible source of, and means of exchanging alternative information, analysis, strategies and experience on gender, identities and culture, ensuring WLUML's unique information resources reaches networkers more widely.

**BUILD** capacity within the network, reaching and involving old and new networkers and organisations, and producing and disseminating information.

**RAISE** awareness of the work being undertaken around empowerment and leadership through the consortia programme supported by the FLOW fund, 'Women's Empowerment for Leadership Development and Democratisation'.

**GENERATE** new analyses contributing to women’s struggles in Muslim countries and communities regarding VLUML critical issues, and provide a platform for a broad range of networkers’ voices and analysis.



<sup>3</sup> VLUML Dossiers 22 to 32 shown here, featuring articles by activists such as Karima Bennoune, Rashida Manjoo, Asghar Ali Engineer, Abdullahi Ahmed An Na’im, Deniz Kandiyoti and Ziba Mir-Hosseini.

# 2012 Publications

WLUML has produced regular collections of critical analyses in the form of dossiers, articles, Occasional Papers, and books on specific topics since 1986. This year the Publication Committee completed the following work:

## **Dossier 32: Sexuality in Muslim Contexts**

In both Muslim-majority countries and Muslim communities, the last decade has witnessed unprecedented organizing efforts by human rights defenders around sexual and reproductive rights, and produced evidence of ongoing local engagement around sexuality issues.

Yet, sexuality constitutes a highly contested and tightly patrolled terrain in all societies, and activists from Muslim contexts are witnessing troubling trends that threaten previous gains or seem indicative of a worsening climate. These trends include curtailment of sexual and reproductive rights as well as increased policing of sexuality, and may operate at different levels. There is a tendency to seek to reverse existing policies or legislations, and also targeting of individuals, or even of entire groups, as and when possible.

Comprised of a combination of in-depth articles, this Dossier explores how women, and some men, navigate the expectations and realities linked to sexuality and reproductive rights in their specific contexts. Contributors also highlight the many ways in which culture, religion, customs and sexual conduct intersect and demonstrate that sexuality, far from being static, is the object of constant contestation and negotiation. Dossier 32 is due to be e-published in Spring 2013.

## **Women's Charters** (edited by Rashida Manjoo and Homa Hoodfar)

The development of women's charters, manifestos and declarations serve as a demand for change and improvement in the status and lives of women. They are also an articulation of the need for gender justice. These documents have given women a platform to demand their rights and voice their concerns over exclusion, inequality, discrimination and oppression. They serve as tools to challenge the roots of institutional and individual belief systems that continue to operate to oppress women. This book reviewing women's charters is a sister companion of two earlier WLUML publications on the gender equity: *Dossier 29 on Women's Machinery* edited by Rashida Manjoo (2008) and *Electoral Politics: Making Gender Quotas Work for Women* edited by Homa Hoodfar and Mona Tajali (2011), and as such will be of interest to those engaged in the mobilization of women in demanding and articulating full equality and full citizenship. The publication is also being translated into Arabic for use in the forthcoming 'Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratization' programme workshops. The book is due to be published by Spring 2013. It has also been sent for translation into French.

## **The Politics of Muslim Women's Sport**

This book explores the way women use sport as a way of participating in public spaces, especially in oppressive contexts. It outlines the challenges that women face when dress codes are used to exclude them from the public sphere and how women are finding innovative ways to continue to claim public space through sport. This book is based on a conference and two subsequent workshops organized by WLUML and Concordia University in Montreal, Canada in 2008. It is expected to be ready for publication by Spring 2013.

## **Publications programme for 2013**

The WLUML Publications Handbook is a guide for WLUML publications work. The handbook will help to further 'systematize' the approach to WLUML publications, ensuring that our institutional memory is retained and built on. A draft of the handbook has been prepared with the support of the Publications Committee, and is aimed at new WLUML networkers, publication officers and members of the editorial board in addition to volunteers. This should be completed in 2013.

The Publications Committee will endeavour to develop more effective solutions for publication and distribution of WLUML texts. This may be done, for example, by increasing e-publications and/or working through Amazon or other presses on printing set-up and page setting. This will potentially cut Publications' costs and develop better distribution through Amazon's extensive market channels. WLUML has also been looking at various alternative options to create a 'web shop' for publications and to distribute publications currently in stock.

## **Volunteers**

WLUML has a strong tradition of working with volunteers on a range of activities in many of the contexts and countries in which it is engaged. Publications have always been supported by the work of volunteers, both in-house at the ICO and abroad. These volunteers include university graduates or other professionals who are interested in the fields of research, writing, editing and publication. WLUML provides the space to learn and earn hands-on experience while volunteers support the Publications Committee. At the ICO, volunteers work under the supervision of the Deputy Director or the Communication and Advocacy Officer, and those at abroad are supervised by the Chair of the Publication Committee and Guest Editor of the particular publication to which they have been allotted. Please see further the Volunteer Acknowledgement section.

## Rebuilding our Editorial team

The WLUML editorial team has discussed possibilities for various publications and how best to rejuvenate our substantial production of materials for the use of women's movements. We have reviewed how the team can optimally offer their skills and experience to revitalize our outreach with more contemporary and appropriate material. To this end, new members were invited to join the editorial team.

The following members joined us in 2012:

Rochelle Terman: (Political Scientist) has been working with WLUML for several years as a networker intern and consultant.

Mona Tajali: (Gender Studies and Political Sciences) has worked with us on the publication *Electoral Politics*.

Vrinda Narian: (Professor of Constitution Law) has been working with Board Member Homa Hoodfar on a range of subjects and has been involved with the Afghan Family Law project. She participated in WLUML's final international conference on Afghan Family Law. Given increasing interest in women in Muslim communities in India, with this becoming a point of public discussion, Prof. Vrinda Narain was invited to join the team. She has worked on the Indian constitution and the question of minorities. She has also worked as legal advisor to several NGOs in North America and India.

## Publications based on WLUML research

This year saw the release of three publications produced from research conducted by WLUML networkers. The publications are as follows:

2012. "Kicking Back: The Sports Arena and Sexual Politics in Iran" in *Sexuality in Muslim Contexts: Regulation and Resistance*. Anissa Hélie and Homa Hoodfar. London: zed books.

2012. "Morality Policing and the Public Sphere: Women Reclaiming their Bodies and their Rights", in *Sexuality in Muslim Contexts: Regulation and Resistance*. Anissa Hélie and Homa Hoodfar. London: zed books (with Ana Ghoreishian).

2012. "Iran: politiques islamiques et femmes en quête d'égalité". In Jacqueline Heinen and Shahra Razavi (Eds), Religion et politique: Les femmes prises au piège. Cahiers du Genre, hors-série 2012. pp. 47-67. Paris: L'Harmattan. With Sadr, Shadi.



**OFFER** a visible source of and means of exchanging alternative information, analysis, strategies and experience on gender, identity and culture, ensuring WLUML's unique information resources reaches networkers more widely.



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<sup>4</sup> 'She left her house one time, and her virginity was tested. Do not remain silent!' International Women's Day march in Cairo, Egypt. March 2012. Photograph: Sally Zohney.

# Communications

## Solidarity and Urgent Actions:

In 2012, the Sudanese Women Human Rights Defender organisation Arry, the Organisation for Women's Freedom in Iraq, the Violence is Not our Culture programme and the WLUML Communications team put out approximately **35** urgent calls for action – among others, for Layla Ibrahim Issa from Sudan, sentenced to stoning; 15-year-old Nagir Rahim, a victim of an “honour-based crime”; and in support of Jalila Khamis and other Sudanese WHRDs who were arrested and tortured as part of the authority's crackdown on activists.

The WLUML Communications team also prepared and circulated a number of statements and petitions relating to the urgent cases above. Statements and petitions also highlighted the troubling Russian Federation-sponsored United Nations resolution on ‘traditional values’; the Sudanese government's recent crackdown on activists; the failed assassination attempt on Malala Yousafzai; and the rights of Tunisian women in face of alarming constitutional amendments.

Due to the power of this collective advocacy and resulting international pressure, three Sudanese WHRDs and another 180 detainees were released on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2012, and Layla Ibrahim Issa was acquitted of her stoning sentence on appeal. Sudanese journalist and activist, Somaya Hendousa, was released in November 2012, followed by the release of Nuba activist Jalila Khamis.

WLUML also assisted with an additional action alert. Information on this can be found in the RCO AME section of the report.

## ICO Networking

The WLUML ICO has been liaising and networking with other activists and organisations through meetings and conferences in the United Kingdom. Between August and November 2012, WLUML attended the Saferworld and Gender and Development Network (GADN) and Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) conference, the Peace Brigades conference on WHRDs, and the conference on ‘Islam, Christianity, and Women Leadership’ at the University of Roehampton. New networkers were invited to join WLUML including Alaa Murabit, activist and founder of *Voice of Libyan Women*, and the Egyptian activist Samira Ibrahim, who visited WLUML's offices and was interviewed by WLUML's Communications and Advocacy Officer and West Asia Officer. WLUML has also joined the Gender and Development Network in the UK.

Internally, the Communications Sub-committee is being revived and a new communications strategy has been developed. There is a special focus on increasing the use and effectiveness of social media. In 2012, WLUML Facebook users doubled and at the end of the year the number stood at over 2000. WLUML's twitter account has also been active in disseminating information and guiding more traffic to the WLUML Facebook page and website. As the year came to a close, the Communications team embarked on a thorough review of the current networkers' on the WLUML network, with a view to revitalizing and expanding the network.

To further help raise WLUML's profile, we connected with the NGO *Participatory Video* to discuss potential projects revolving around the documentation of WLUML's institutional memory and history, using archival material and producing new material filmed by networkers from their respective cities. These films would also be used as a means to reach out to the younger generation of activists in order to strengthen and expand WLUML's solidarity network.

**BUILD** capacity within the network, reaching and involving old and new networkers and organisations, and producing and disseminating information.



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<sup>5</sup>Networker Aya Chebbi: interviewing Carol Bellamy at the World Innovation Summit for Education in Qatar.

<sup>6</sup>Networker group Canadian Council of Muslim Women. Members are in front of the Al Rashid mosque in Edmonton on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of CCMW in 1982.

<sup>7</sup>Networker group BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights. Participants at the political education training for political aspirants in Osun state, Nigeria Sept 2012.

# WLUML's Regional Coordination Offices

## RCO Asia: Shirkat Gah

In its role as WLUML RCO Asia, Shirkat Gah worked in the following areas:

### Advocacy and Support

**Solidarity and Alerts:** In 2012, Shirkat Gah continued active advocacy on issues such as threats to women's rights activists; minority women's conversion; and violation of women's rights in South Asia.

A total of 16 alerts and petitions were posted relating to women's rights violations and issues for Asia and the Middle East. The majority of these alerts and petitions aimed to support Women Human Rights Defenders faced with threats to safety from State and non State actors, and incarceration in countries such as Philippines, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sudan.

Shirkat Gah presented at WLUML/VNC panels on "The nexus between culture and discrimination based on gender and other identities: strategies of women's resistance," and also presented at the "Video Advocacy: Visioning Cultures Free from Violence" segment at the Association of Women In Development (AWID) Forum in April 2012, highlighting peasant women's resistance and journey towards empowerment within the AMP Movement.

### Campaigns

A dedicated campaign in Pakistan for murdered Human Rights Defender (HRD), Farida Afridi resulted in an acknowledgment of the real threat to HRDs by responses from President of Pakistan and the Governor of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. This campaign also facilitated material support to Farida's colleagues and family.

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign in Pakistan this year included advocacy actions with the help of 35 partners across Pakistan, involved in over 60 events. All of these events included the promotion of the concept of Violence is Not our Culture and the VNC program. SG also supported WLUML through ongoing online advocacy via Facebook and Twitter.

Support to WLUML's ICO advocacy on issues such as abortion and cultural rights of women and endorsement of these positions at the UN and other international levels was undertaken by the Shirkat Gah Director and Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, Farida Shaheed.

## Capacity Building

In June 2012, Farida Shaheed presented at the WLUML WELDD Strategic Planning workshop in London. Providing insights on leadership and what it means to be a 'feminist leader', Farida spent two days with WLUML Board members and staff, building capacity and providing strategic insights.

## Publications

Shirkat Gah continued to contribute to WLUML publications, including:

- An article for WLUML Dossier 32 (Sexuality in Muslim Contexts) on Women's Reproductive Health in Pakistan.
- Four quarterly news sheets with 8000 English, 8000 Urdu and 2000 Sindhi copies disseminated to approximately 12,000 people through mailing lists, and to approximately 5000 through stalls at events.
- Provided material for the *Great Ancestors* Arabic translation to the WLUML ICO.

## RCO AME: GREFELS

In its role as WLUML RCO Africa and the Middle East (AME), GREFELS worked in the following areas:

## Research: Cultural Violence Against Women (CVAW)

WLUML AME has been a partner of the Violence is Not our Culture programme since the Women Reclaiming and Redefining Culture Programme. The partnership continued in 2012 through research on child marriage, forced eating and violence against women living with a disability. WLUML AME has also continued to conduct training and advocacy on child marriage

and forced eating in Africa. Force-feeding is an ancient cultural practice which involves forcing a girl to eat a substantial quantity of food rich in fats and carbohydrates to accelerate her physical development in order to marry her early. This practice is mainly seen in Saharan populations of the Western Sahel: Mauritania, Niger and Northern Mali. In these societies a woman's obesity is not only a criterion of beauty, but an external sign of wealth of the family.

In 2012 research on these themes was carried out in Nigeria and Sudan. In Nigeria the research was done by the Centre for Women and Adolescent Empowerment in Yola, Adamawa State, and in Sudan the research was conducted by Salmmah Women's Resource Centre in Khartoum State. The studies looked at national, traditional, Islamic (based on interpretations of the Quran and Sunna), and personal status laws in relation to child marriage. Issues such as: how religion was used as a basis for practicing and supporting child marriage; misconceptions that child marriage reduces the infection rate for HIV; dominant notions of family honour; the high value given to a girls' virginity; and girls given away in marriage earlier in order to keep their virtue intact and ensure their virginity. Further research on the CVAW practice of forced feeding in Mauritania was also conducted.

This research forms part of a strategic initiative to ban the practices of forced eating and child marriage through legal reform, educating and sensitizing communities and parents, and empowering girls. An overarching recommendation which came out of the research was to strengthen partnerships and activism to force governments to review customary and civil laws in the light of internationally agreed human rights standards.

GREFELS also participated at the Association of Women In Development (AWID) Forum in the Violence is Not our Culture programme panel activities.

## Publications

GREFELS continued to make contributions to WLUML publications, including an article for Dossier 32 in 2012 on "Women and HIV/AIDS in Senegal: the impact of traditional practices related to sexuality." In Senegal, where gender is recognised as a social factor contributing to the feminization of AIDS, concrete actions that aim at changing power relations within the family and community are still not integrated into HIV/AIDS programmes, despite the fact that many traditional practices that are still firmly grounded in Senegalese society are likely to increase the vulnerability of both men and women to AIDS. Most of these customary practices, ranging from those endorsing violence against women to others that promote men's multi-partnerships, are often legitimized by religion or by custom.

## Communications

GREFELS electronic database consists of over 450 individuals and organisations. Out of these the list serve, an electronic email list, sends regular information out to 227 members (women leaders, activists, researchers, journalists etc in the Africa and Middle East region) and continues to lobby for rights to be respected and disseminate news of legal reform.

## Support to the Due Diligence Project

This project aims at ending violence against women by highlighting state responsibility and demanding due diligence for cases of violence against women (VAW). As part of the project, questionnaires were distributed to several Senegalese NGOs working on VAW. A number of questionnaires were completed and sent back to the Due Diligence Project. The final results will be compiled and reported back.

## Support for Women Human Rights Defenders

In order to support a notable political and human rights activist and defender, WLUML acted on her behalf in difficult circumstances. The WHRD in question has worked with human rights defenders in Sudan for the last 10 years and organized numerous campaigns to monitor violations against activists. She has been arrested several times by authorities in Khartoum for her demonstrations against the war in Sudan, and for spreading information about human rights violations. Her house was raided by armed forces, and her personal computer and mobile phone and other items were taken by the police.

As her life has been repeatedly threatened in Sudan, she needed support to reallocate to another country. She was able to go to Egypt where much needed funds were made available to ensure she could continue her activism. WLUML AME drafted a proposal on her behalf to the Urgent Action Fund which released a grant in her name. She is now closely linked with WLUML AME and Egyptian networkers.



# Programmes and Campaigns

## Violence is Not our Culture

In 2012, the Violence is Not our Culture (VNC) programme continued to make important strides into exposing the use of culture, including religion, to justify discrimination against women and girls and to pursue strategic partnerships to support its work.

## Solidarity & Action Alerts

The VNC programme supported 18 solidarity and action alerts - eight of which were initiated by VNC. Two cases of women in Sudan who were accused of adultery and sentenced to death signified a major turning point in exposing the misuse of Shari'a to justify the cruel punishment of women through stoning. Stoning as a form of punishment is in Sudan's criminal code. Sentences of stoning against the two Sudanese women, Insitar Sharif Abdallah and Layla Ibrahim, were suspended and they were eventually freed due largely to pressure on local authorities by international and domestic forces opposed to the judgments. In the course of carrying out these actions, VNC made links with new Sudanese allies, including members of SIHA ([Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa](#)) in the defense of Insitar Sharif Abdallah, and two Sudanese lawyers in defense of Layla Ibrahim Issa. The [petition launched](#) on behalf of Layla Ibrahim Issa was able to mobilize 574 signatures from the general public.

## Collaborations and Partnerships

In 2011, VNC linked up with the Gender Across Borders blog ([www.genderacrossborders.com](http://www.genderacrossborders.com) - GAB) to coordinate a blog-series on "Culture and Human Rights", which would run on both their and VNC's websites. The joint call for submissions was sent out by VNC, GAB, WLUML and AWID, resulting in such a high volume of responses that GAB decided to dedicate two series to the topic. We received responses that spanned the entire globe, including submissions from contexts as diverse as the Ukraine, Fiji, Colombia, Canada, South Africa, the UK and more. Part One of the series included 22 entries and ran in November 2011 and Part II of the series featured 15 entries and ran in January 2012. These are available to read here: <http://www.violenceisnotourculture.org/News-and-Views/second-blog-series>

**AWID Forum and Events:** The VNC programme team participated in a strategic dialogue hosted by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) on Digital Security and

Activism on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012. The team also participated in the Feminist Tech Exchange on 18<sup>th</sup> April, giving a workshop on strategies to counter CVAW immediately prior to the AWID Forum.

At the AWID Forum 2012, the VNC team was also able to take part in two events with partners from GREFELS, Shirkat Gah, and Solidaritas Perempuan. The first event was a talk show on the *Nexus between Culture, Gender and Other Identities: Resisting Discrimination and Reclaiming Space*, a workshop on “Visioning Cultures Free from Violence.” The second event, entitled ‘Transnational Advocacy and Communications using Visual Arts and Digital Media’ focused on using comic books, documentaries, online broadcasting and other online media to challenge CVAW. Both events were well received by delegates from various regions attending the Forum.

**Special mention of the VNC programme was also made by former UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women Yakin Erturk during her Day Two opening remarks on “Culture versus Rights Dualism: Myth or Reality?” A version of her presentation was published as well on Open Democracy: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/yakin-erturk/culture-versus-rights-dualism-myth-or-reality>.**

In recognition of its work in promoting online activism, the VNC programme team was also invited in November to a consultation meeting convened by Amnesty International on technology and human rights.

The VNC programme joined the WLUML team (together with representatives from Shirkat Gah and the Institute for Women’s Empowerment) in writing the proposal to the Dutch Ministry’s FLOW funding scheme. The proposal was successful in securing funding that would support WLUML/VNC’s work on CVAW in the next three years. The VNC Campaign Team is currently involved in setting up the CVAW projects under this tripartite consortium known as the Women’s Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation (WELDD) Programme.

## Communications Statistics

VNC continues to maintain its online communications platforms, including a website, list serve, Facebook page, and Twitter account. All platforms are hosted for free.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> January and – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2012, the VNC website has 42,046 visits, of which 36,458 were new visitors. From May 2012 onwards, the website averaged about 4,300 visits a month. The VNC Listserve has 717 subscribers, and the Facebook page had 464 followers by the end of 2012.

# 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

## Global Action from the WLUMML Network

WLUMML and its network and partners worldwide joined forces in 2012 against the spectre of violence against women. Taking part in urgent action during the sixteen days between the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the International Day for Human Rights, activists around the world participated in this vital international campaign online, in the streets, and in local communities. Together, they sent a clear message – gender-based violence is a violation of human rights, and the time to act against it is now.

**WLUMML highlighted the amazing work of activists against gender violence worldwide through its 16 Narratives series.** We heard from women on the ground in Egypt, Iraq, Sudan, Pakistan, Iran, the Gambia, Afghanistan, the Diaspora and more about the diverse challenges they face and their bravery and innovative resistance against these threats.

On November 25th, the first day of the campaign, WLUMML issued a statement in support of the campaign, and put a spotlight on human rights violations in the contexts in which we work. As we said then: according to a 2005 World Health Organisation study, at least one in three women worldwide will be beaten, raped, or abused in her lifetime. The eradication of all forms of gender-based violence is integral to the struggle to achieve social justice and gender-equality.

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, WLUMML issued a call for action for Taysier Abdelgadir Shaaldin, a Sudanese woman human rights defender (WHRD) who recently fled to Egypt for her safety. Along with the Arry Organisation for Human Rights, WLUMML called for support for her and other Sudanese WHRDs who continue to live under the fear of threats against their lives and the lives of their children, even after being forced out of Sudan.

Across the world, WLUMML networkers engaged in action on the 16 days of activism against gender violence. In Senegal, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, WLUMML International Director, Fatou Sow, and partner organisations marched for women's right to remain free of violence. In Kuala Lumpur, members of WLUMML and its key programme against culturally-justified violence (CVAW), Violence is Not our Culture, met up to learn and plan action on CVAW. Along with high-level experts, senior human rights lawyers and global partners, our team focused in particular on combating stoning and forced marriage.

In Pakistan, Shirkat Gah and its regional partners engaged in an inspiring list of actions designed to tackle the roots of gender-based violence. Shirkat Gah provided all partner organisations with resources to facilitate their 16 days activities, including fliers that highlight pro-woman laws applicable in Pakistan.

Around the country, regional women's organisations initiated a broad range of actions. Shade Baluchistan held sensitization sessions on women in household decision making in local villages. Al-Shahbaz organised a rally and activist theatre on the subject of domestic violence. ROSHNI set up human rights education training in Multan; MRDO and SWWS set up radio programs to discuss women's rights; the Naujwan Development Society organised a rally against early child marriage; and the Sindh Development Society launched a talk show, rally and street theatre, working creatively against domestic violence. In total, 31 partner organisations organised against gender violence during these 16 days.

For Sudanese women, Girifna and the Arry Organisation for Human Rights collaborated on an online campaign calling for an end to all forms of violence against women from Sudan. December 9<sup>th</sup> was declared a day for solidarity with Sudanese women.

Justice for Iran released a pioneering report on sexual torture in Iranian prisons on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, wrapping up the 16 days campaign. 'Crimes and Impunity' is based on the testimonials of victims, survivors and witnesses, examining the extent to which women prisoners have been systematically subjected to sexual violence as a gender-specific means of silencing young Iranian girls and women dissidents.

Finally, weeks of advocacy and calls for action from WLUML and its network ended in a success for imprisoned Iranian human rights lawyer, Nasrin Sotoudeh, during the 16 days of action. Sakharov Freedom of Thought prize winner Nasrin ended her 49 day hunger strike after the Iranian government lifted a travel ban on her 12 year-old daughter, following intense pressure from women's rights organisations worldwide.

For more information, WLUML's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Women-Living-Under-Muslim-Laws-Solidarity-Network/173314106036158?fref=ts>

For Women Living Under Muslim Laws' 16 Narratives: <http://www.wluml.org/section/news/latest>

WLUML's Statement on the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence: <http://www.wluml.org/media/16-days-campaign-together-against-gender-based-violence>

Sudanese WHRD Call for Action: <http://www.wluml.org/action/sudan-sudanese-whrds-egypt-receive-death-threats>



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## West Asia focus

### Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa region has been going through great transformation over the past two years. Political upheavals have brought about new opportunities and challenges, especially for women. The role of international and transnational organisations such as WLUML must be reviewed in light of these events. There is a need to explore the region to find out what WLUML can offer in terms of how we can best support women working on the ground, particularly post the revolutions.

WLUML has begun working with grassroots organisations and activists on the ground in the region to ensure their voices are heard. Given WLUML's detailed knowledge and extensive contacts, there is a lot that WLUML can offer women's rights activists, both old and new; and in turn these activists will increase the passion and vibrancy of the WLUML network. Reaching out to activists to consolidate WLUML's existing networks is essential. One area where

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<sup>8</sup> 'Right.' International Women's Day march in Cairo, Egypt. March 2012. Photograph: Sally Zohney.

WLUML excels in facilitating experience sharing between women, and in terms of West Asia, sharing between Iranians and countries of the Arab Spring will provide those new to the women's rights movement with the wisdom of women who have been post revolution for some time. WLUML's current programme, Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation (WELDD), also has a great deal to offer in terms of building the leadership capacity of women in the region and providing them with information and resources in their own languages.

## Scope of work

In 2012 WLUML conducted a mapping study to look at issues of VAW (including impact of militarisation), women's political and public participation and family law/personal status law in nine countries: Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and Iraq. This mapping study incorporated information about key organisations in each country; names and contacts of key activists in those countries; and background information about each country including their status with regard to international human rights commitments.

Within the framework of the WELDD project, a regional workshop in MENA is being organised and will be held in Cairo in January 2013. The overarching goal of this workshop is to build women's leadership. WLUML reached out to 22 women's groups and organisations in Syria, Iraq, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan and Egypt to nominate candidates to participate in this workshop. We focused on women's rights organisations and youth led initiatives to encourage young women to participate. One of the goals of the regional workshops is to bring women from those countries together to develop a regional network, and additionally to:

- Publicize the West Asia development work within WLUML's network, ensuring that current networkers and supporters can give advice, suggestion and links; and
- Prepare a 'resource audit' with the support of a steering group.

## WLUML Arabic website

Since October 2012, 40 news pieces were uploaded to WLUML's Arabic website. These include information on various topics that concern women such as: violence against women, women's public/political participation, and honour killings. WLUML published articles written by prominent Egyptian women's rights activist Nawal Al Saadawi, news about honour killings in Jordan and FGM in Egypt, as well as an interview with Egyptian activist Samira Ibrahim. By updating news, we aim to amplify the voices of women coming from the region and inform these women about what is happening in other countries.

Ten papers and studies were uploaded on WLUML's Arabic website in 2012. They include studies about the Arab uprisings, women human rights defenders, and women's leadership. For example, a paper entitled 'Strong Voices' aims to highlight the role of Yemeni women in the uprising; the 'Women's Human Rights Defenders Manual' defines women's human rights defenders and emphasizes their role in Egypt; and another source explored the role of women in local governance in Algeria.

In order to improve and revitalize the Arabic section of the WLUML website, we conducted a review in the last quarter of 2012 and developed a report outlining recommendations on website improvement. These recommendations included: translating all the English material into Arabic, updating the news section, updating action alerts and resources, and rewriting the Arabic fact sheet to make the language more accessible.

## New contacts in the West Asia region

WLUML had a breakthrough in Syria, connecting with several women's groups, such as the Syrian Women Organisation for Democratic Action, Women for life, and the Democratic Women Forum. These groups are working on the ground all over Syria to support local women's significant struggles. They work on building women's capacity and ensure their inclusion in public participation; and network with regional and international organisations to amplify the voices of Syrian women.

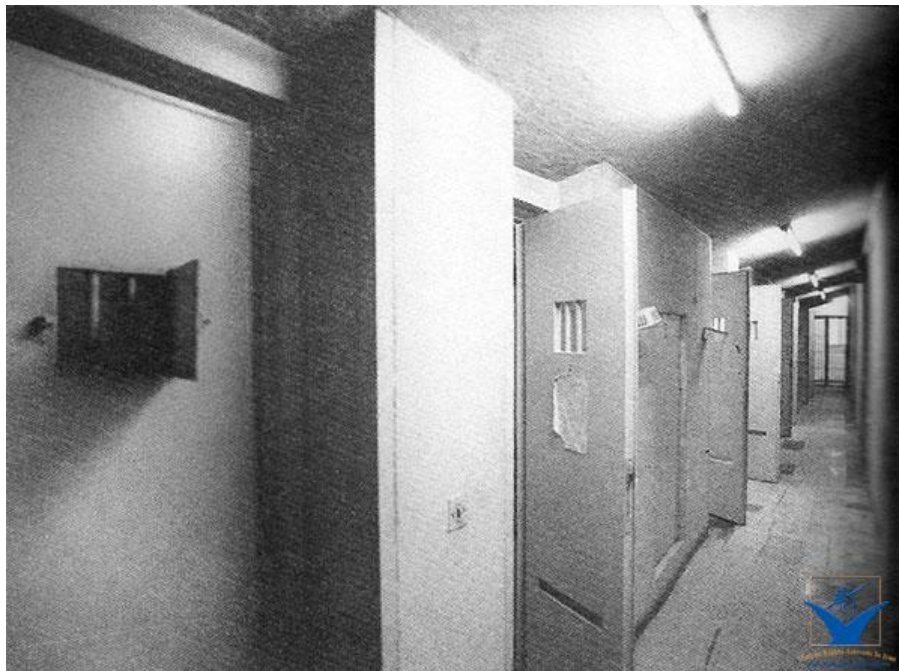
In Iraq, WLUML connected with organisations working on the ground such as the Iraqi Al-Amal organisation, Baghdad Women's Association, and the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq. WLUML also worked with Houzan Mahmoud, a prominent Iraqi activist, who will be attending the WELDD workshop in January 2013. WLUML also forged links with Iranian organisations and activists working in the Diaspora, such as the International Coalition against Violence in Iran (ICAVI).

Developing the WLUML network in the West Asia region is at the early stages and the groundwork has been laid. During 2013, our mapping work and development of contacts will continue and WLUML expects to develop these relationships, bringing learning resources to women's groups and collaborating and building co-operative partnerships, while keeping a focus on and helping to strengthen women's rights and human rights movements in the region.

# Iran Focus

The WLUML Iran focus commenced in February 2011 and it is now in its second year. As part of its West Asia work focusing on Iran, WLUML collaborated with Justice for Iran (JFI) on their 'Crimes without Punishment' project. This work with JFI is the latest in a long line of WLUML collaborations and capacity building offered to sister organisations. The WLUML Iran Programme Coordinator, Shadi Sadr, (2009 Human Rights Tulip Award winner) manages this project. 'Crimes without Punishment' is a comprehensive research program that documents and raises awareness of human rights abuses against female political prisoners in Iran. It has been a feature of WLUML communications and advocacy work through the Farsi and Dari sections of the WLUML website.

## Crimes without Punishment



نمای یکی از کریدورهای ۲۰۹

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## Overview

Throughout the 1980s in Iran, thousands of individuals were arrested and detained for supposedly supporting or participating in oppositional political organisations that were critical

<sup>9</sup> View of interior of women's prison, Iran.



of the Islamic Republic regime's undemocratic practices. So far, many reports have been published that detail the various methods of torture inflicted upon political prisoners in that decade. However, despite anecdotal evidence on sexual abuses in the prisons of Iran, this topic has not yet been subject to systematic study. JFI's research project, Crimes without Punishment, aims to thoroughly document cases of rape and other forms of sexual torture used against female political prisoners in three reports. The first report covers the 1980s (published in Farsi in December 2011); the second report will cover the subsequent period between 1990-2009; and the third will cover events following the 2009 elections. Work on the second and third reports comprised the main part of JFI's activity during 2012.

JFI's goal in conducting this research and preparing these reports is to launch a public discourse on a subject which has haunted many women's lives and has discouraged thousands of others from entering public politics for fear of being raped in the infamous prisons of Iran. Indeed the issue of rape in prisons has been known throughout Iran, but never discussed seriously and openly in public due to the extreme cultural taboos on the topic. This taboo and prevalent perceptions of shame and (dis)honour in Iran has meant that open discussion of rape or torture is perceived to negatively impact on not just the victims, but also their wider family and associates. As such, the state escapes responsibility and accountability for not only letting these atrocities happen, but for its role in actively promoting sexual torture as a tool for political control. We feel that unless these systematic occurrences of rape against female political prisoners are documented and presented to the public, nationally and internationally, the culture of sexual violence against women by the state will continue, and worse, encourage others to commit the same crimes without fear of punishment.

Victims could bear witness to what happened to them while in custody; however, they had no way of documenting such a wide scale use of rape and sexual harassment as means of torture against political prisoners. It was in this context that JFI saw the need for in-depth research that would shed light on some of these questions by examining how and where these sexual abuses occurred and the extent to which they were systematic. Much political analysis has assumed that sexual abuse and harsh treatment of women political prisoners was a deliberate action by the Iranian regime aimed at discouraging women from public participation in politics. However, lack of a research and analysis of this situation has prevented wider engagement and discussion on these human rights abuses. It was in this context that JFI decided to launch the project 'Crimes without Punishment' in order to shed light on these matters. Both WLUML and JFI hope that the findings of this project contribute to the public discourse which has otherwise been silent around this particular form of human rights abuse; where the perpetrators have felt immune from punishment because of the public's lack of willingness to accept or debate such abuses by the regime.

## Scope of Work and Outputs in 2012:

As part of the primary research, JFI had to find victims of rape or sexual torture, or their families. Interviews were conducted with 44 women political prisoners (WPP) and 8 informants (including lawyers, family members, journalists, etc.). JFI recorded 48 audio testimonies of WPP and informants, and 29 videos of testimonies. The number of the total interviewees was greater than anticipated in the original research scope.

JFI produced a report on rape and sexual torture in the 90s following the 2009 election in Farsi and in English. We are working on finalizing the Farsi version of the report which will be ready for publication in 2013.

A comprehensive English report, 'Crime and Impunity,' was published in 2012 and is available on JFI's website. The hard copy is available on Amazon. A total of 467 people including journalists, UN and EU officials and NGO activists received a soft copy of this report. The report was also sent to 100 influential international personalities. We expect the English version of the report will be ready in 2013.

Thirteen of our witnesses were approached and interviewed by the media (including BBC Persian TV and Radio Farda) and some also spoke at different public events.

JFI contacted and sent the thematic reports to community leaders and influential Iranian individuals. A total of 78 Iranian officials and influential individuals including the Supreme Leader, the high ranking authorities, judicial authorities, the major Iranian Embassies and the high ranking clergy (Ulama) received the report.

JFI also organised four public events hosted by local organisations to present the results of the Crime without Punishment project with some of the witnesses as speakers (9th of March in Berlin, 17th of March in Paris, 20th of September in Hanover and 27th of September in Frankfurt). Over 300 people attended the events.

## WLUML's Farsi and Dari Website

Two campaigns were initiated on the Farsi/Dari section of the WLUML website. Both successfully succeeded in mobilizing women's rights activists in Iran to work together to advocate on the following issues. For 'Stop the registration of anti-women's traditions as 'national heritage,' about 1000 signatures were collected for this campaign. The second campaign focused on the decision by Parliament to pass a law to prohibit single women to go abroad without their father's permission. The 'Iranian single women - father's permission to go abroad' campaign raised over 400 signatures.

Other important and related news and articles to Farsi/Dari readers were translated and published from the WLUML English pages. Feminist media in Muslim contexts and in the Middle East and North Africa, in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq and Syria was monitored for

news to be translated in Farsi. A total of 41 news items were posted and promoted to a number of women's rights websites. We also produced new e-publications: *Women, power and resistance in Iran, after revolution* by Fatemeh Sadeghi; 'Beijing Platform in UN, towards Beijing and beyond'; and 'Millennium Goals'. Five audio/video files were uploaded, and we raised four urgent calls for action.

A survey and research was carried out in order to promote visitors to the website and better monitor visitor activity on the website. We compiled a subscriber list of women's rights activists to whom we could send our regular newsletters and updates. In addition, there we host a Farsi/ Dari Facebook page with 110 followers thus far. We are hoping to significantly increase this figure in 2013.

## Future Plans

In 2013, WLUML will begin a new 18 month programme, 'Space for Human Rights, Women's Rights and Citizenship in Iran'. This programme seeks to improve the capacity of citizens and civil society groups to organise and advocate for citizen interests and enhance capabilities to protect internationally recognised legal rights through publication of new women's rights resources. It focuses on information dissemination using WLUML's main site and the Farsi/ Dari section.

We are hoping to recruit volunteers to assist us in the art work for our forthcoming publications, working on photo-shop and page design. We are also looking forward to increasing our Afghani women volunteer base.

**RAISE** awareness of the work being undertaken around empowerment and leadership through the consortia programme



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## Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation (WELDD)

The most significant development for WLUML in 2012 was the new WELDD programme.

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<sup>10</sup> Trainers and participants at the WELDD workshop in Cairo, Egypt, January 2013.

WLUML is part of a consortium, with Shirkat Gah as the lead partner and the Institute for Women's Empowerment as third partner, which was awarded a grant in 2011 by the Dutch Government's FLOW Fund. The programme's objectives are to advance equal rights and opportunities for women and girls in the following areas:

- Women's participation in public and political arenas for strengthening democratising processes;
- Safety and security through strengthening women's leadership to combat violence against women that is excused in the name of culture, and actively promoting women's involvement in processes of peace, security and reconstruction; and
- Economic self-reliance through increasing women's access to and control over economic resources.

The WELDD programme will contribute to these three areas by building leadership capacity of at least 1,500 women in at least 10 DAC countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East (and select additional countries), establishing strong alliances and coalitions within and across national borders.

An important feature of this programme is that it will invest in women's leadership to act locally, regionally and globally. The linkages from local to global will help to increase visibility of community women's concerns, needs and demands to an international audience, especially within the United Nations system, so that international standards and norms can reinforce local initiatives in a cycle of empowerment.

Under the WELDD programme, WLUML is responsible for delivering activities on leadership development, and strategies to combat Cultural Violence Against Women (CVAW). Funding for WELDD will run for three and a half years (from 2012 to the first half of 2015).

## WELDD 2012 Activities

Between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2012, WLUML held a WELDD strategic planning meeting in London with Farida Shaheed, the Director of Shirkat Gah, to further refine the activities that would be delivered by WLUML during the WELDD programme. The outcomes of the meeting were a set of clear deliverables and a general timeline for delivery.

To ensure the WELDD programme has a clear vision and direction behind it that is consistent with the goals and mission of WLUML as an organisation, a WELDD concept note was developed in July and distributed to the Board and Council Members for comment.

A detailed six-month activity report, along with the concept note, was communicated to Shirkat Gah in July. Following this, a meeting was held in Lahore, Pakistan in September to further

discuss and develop the concepts of 'Feminist Leadership', Cultural Violence Against Women, and other issues, along with refining activities planned by all three partners.

The following activities were delivered under each outcome between July 2012 and December 2012.

## *Outcome 1 - Leadership and political participation*

### Workshops:

Relevant materials on women's political participation and leadership, including Dossiers, WLUML's Feminist Leadership Institutes' training materials, and WLUML publications such as *Electoral Politics: Making Quotas Work for Women* were reviewed for inclusion in the literature for training workshops to be held in 2013. Selected lists of the most relevant literature on women's political participation and leadership have been translated into Arabic and French for the MENA and West Africa workshops.

Preparation for the MENA WELDD Leadership Workshop, to be held in January in Cairo, Egypt was in its final stages and includes mapping and selection of partner organisations in the nominated five countries – Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Libya; development of terms of reference for the workshop and trainers; invitation to trainers and selection of trainers; development of criteria for participant selection process and selection of participants; preparation of training materials for inclusion in training packs; and logistical arrangements including accommodation, transport, catering and administration.

Preparations were also underway for the West Africa Workshop to be held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2013. This included mapping of partner organizations; finalizing the concept note; terms of reference for workshop trainers; and setting the participant criteria. The reviewed training resources, where possible, are currently being translated into French.

### *WELDD Web portal*

WLUML is responsible for the development of the WELDD web portal. The new web portal will house all the newly developed resources from the WELDD programme from the three partners. The portal is a key part of the WELDD programme, as it is the means by which the programme disseminates its work to an online audience.

Meetings with web development companies and designers took place throughout the end of 2012 to prepare for the development of the portal, which will house a sustainable transformative feminist leadership library and WELDD activities, research, and campaigns. Terms of Reference to engage a web design company and a project proposal were developed,

including a web portal content concept note circulated to and approved by the WELDD Management Group (WMG).

Resources to be uploaded on to the web portal were selected in consultation with the WMG, and these will be translated into the following languages: Arabic, French, Indonesian, Urdu, and Farsi.

Projected web portal resources include a WHRD manual prepared by the Egypt-based women's rights organization Nazra; *Electoral Politics- Making Quotas Work*; *Great Ancestors*; *Women's Leadership – Why Should You Care* by Charlotte Bunch; the film *Pray the Devil back to Hell*; *Two Steps Forward – Peasant women's struggle Mausam (The Dry Season)* by Shirkat Gah; and *Changing Tides* (a film on Shirkat Gah's Women Friendly Spaces).

### *Outcome 3 - Challenging Cultural Violence Against Women*

WLUML's programme on WELDD Outcome 3 was rolled out in July 2012. Ten partners were identified for our chosen themes: forced marriage and stoning. The partners are based in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Senegal, Nigeria and Indonesia (Aceh). See attached list of partners.

By the end of December 2012, the following had been undertaken by the Outcome 3 project team: scoping papers on forced marriage and stoning were commissioned; a needs assessment of partners involved in the forced marriage cluster was completed; a transnational meeting with prospective partners was convened in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November; and the human rights framework that could be adopted in Outcome 3 was discussed and information shared by partners on CVAW in their respective contexts.



## WLUML Acknowledges

### ICO Staff:

Joining WLUML in 2012 are two new staff: Mariem Omari as Deputy Director, and Yasmin Ghrawi as Communications and Advocacy Officer.

Mariem Omari, the new Deputy Director, started on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012. She is a committed advocate of women's rights who has been living and working across the MENA region for the past five years in countries such as Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia. In that time she has worked with some of the most vulnerable women in the region – IDPs, refugees and survivors of violence. Her academic background includes an Honors dissertation on representations of South-East Asian Muslims in the Australian press, and a Masters in International Relations from the Australian National University focusing on Gender and Islam (2007). Her last position up to April 2012 was Coordinator, Advocacy and Communication Programmes, MENA region, for Médecins du Monde, the French medical non-governmental organisation. She speaks English and Arabic. Mariem is looking forward to stepping into her new role with WLUML where she can support the network and encourage new activists to become part of WLUML. Mariem is the WLUML lead for the new consortia programme 'Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratization' (WELDD) programme.

Yasmin Ghrawi, the new Communication and Advocacy Officer, started on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012. She holds a Bachelor of Arts, Political Studies and International Relations from the American

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<sup>11</sup> WELDD Outcome 3 (CVAW) workshop. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. December 2012.



University of Beirut, Lebanon (2004), and a Master of Science in Anthropology and Development, from the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK (2008). She has worked for over five years in a number of third-sector and Government organisations in Lebanon, Germany, and the United Kingdom. A native Arabic speaker, Yasmin speaks and works in English and has an intermediate knowledge of German and French. She will be undertaking the communications work for WLUMML along with coordinating the West Asia programme for HIVOS.

WLUMML would like to thank Sally Buchanan for her dedication and excellent work in 2012. Sally Buchanan was recruited as maternity cover for Anthonia Onwordi, the Finance and Administration Officer in May 2012. She completed her function with competence, commitment, and grace and left the ICO in December 2012.

## Consultants

Shaina Greiff was a committed addition to WLUMML. She worked on a variety of activities from writing and editing papers to working on administrative and financial tasks and managing the WLUMML website and solidarity cases.

### **Joining:**

Edna Aquino, Rima Athar, Rochelle Terman were contracted to carry out the CVAW work as part of the WELDD programme from May to December 2012. Edna Aquino will be serving as the WLUMML CVAW Coordinator for Outcome 3 of the WELDD programme. In 2012 Rima Athar will assist Edna with the co-ordination of Outcome 3 and worked on the Stoning and Forced Marriage focus areas, and Rochelle Terman will prepare scoping papers on stoning and forced marriage.

A special mention should be made here for Edna Aquino's enormous effort to help develop the WLUMML/CVAW element of the WELDD programme.

Dina Wahba has been with the WLUMML ICO since May 2012 to work on the West Asia mapping and to help organise the forthcoming Cairo workshops in 2013 as part of the WELDD programme. She has a Masters in Gender studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and her dissertation was on 'Gendering in the Egyptian Revolutions'.

## Fellows & Interns

The ICO is most fortunate to have Naureen Shameem for a whole year thanks to her placement under the 2012 Harvard Law Public Service Fellowship scheme. She holds a Masters of Law from Harvard Law School and her dissertation was on Women, Islamic Law and Human Rights. A Pakistani-Canadian, she speaks English, Urdu and French. Naureen currently works

on a number of projects including coordination of the Think Tank group and subsequent project development; the WLUML/WELDD workshop in West Africa; expanding the WLUML network; and assisting with the WELDD web portal and Publications work.

WLUML ICO hosted Eleonora Arcuri in September 2012 as an intern for a short study placement during which Eleonora completed her Masters dissertation on Muslim family arbitration. She assisted with communications updates and adding content to the WLUML website.

## Volunteers

And extra special mention needs to be made to highlight the work of WLUML's dedicated volunteers:

During the last year Aisling Barratt worked in Montreal under Homa Hoodfar's supervision and in constant contact with our contributors and editors: Anissa Helie for Dossier 32 and Rashida Manjoo for the Women's Charter. WLUML's policy allows a volunteer to develop a project of their own where they can contribute, produce, or conduct their own research. Aisling has conducted research on the history and struggle of women in Europe and North America and has written a chapter for the *Politics of Sport* publication due out in 2013.

Nasrin Afzali is one of WLUML's long term networkers who also participated in the WLUML Feminist Leadership Institute in 2007 and has been working with us since then. She volunteered during 2012 to look after the Farsi website and organised and managed seven volunteer networkers who helped with translation work. She is one of our major editors and reads the work that has been translated into Farsi. As a result of her dedication, several WLUML Farsi publications have been uploaded this year. She also reviews Iranian websites and sends news to the networkers as well as the WLUML Communications team, and reviews the Middle Eastern women's rights sites and news and translates the any relevant information for Iranian women..

Azadeh Momeni joined the Farsi Editorial Board in April 2012. Her interest is primarily in women's political participation and gender policies. She worked on the verification of 'Great Ancestors' which is now ready for page setting. She is also an adviser for the Farsi website.

## Partners

WLUML acknowledges and very warmly appreciates the tremendous help and support given by individuals and sister organisations in 2012. In particular Shirkat Gah, the lead partner in the WELDD consortium, along with the Institute of Women's Empowerment. These WELDD partners were instrumental in the development of the new WELDD programme.

Finally, a special mention to HIVOS, as they have underpinned WLUML's work through their grant support of WLUML's core activities and focus areas.

# 2012 Financial Information

WLUML acknowledges the generous contribution of our funders and private donors who believe in building strong women's movements by supporting organisations such as ours, and who have continued to support us in the current challenging financial climate.

## Income

<b>Funder</b>	<b>Amount, GBP</b>
Flow Fund.....	132,807
HIVOS.....	82,191
JFI.....	37,029
Donations.....	8,587
Legacy.....	6,187
Urgent Action Fund.....	1,490
Publication Sales and other income.....	373

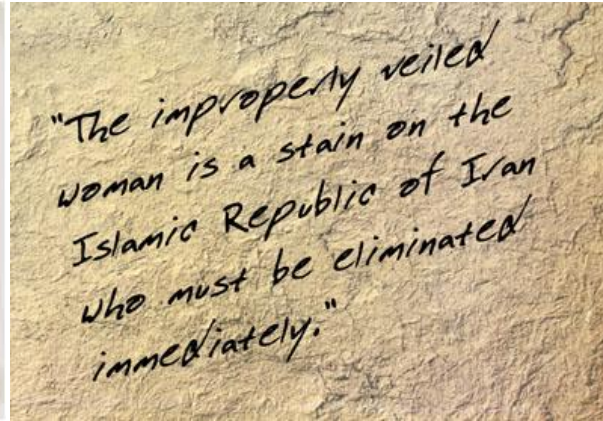
**Total Income**  
**268,664**

## Expenses

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Amount, GBP</b>
WELDD Programme .....	59,318
Space for Human Rights, Women's Rights & Citizenship in Iran Programme.....	42,643
Advocacy & Capacity Building.....	20,532
Management Costs.....	69,710
Communication & Media.....	6,645
Urgent Actions.....	1,490
Networking & Related Costs.....	1,448
Volunteer Programme & Internship .....	2,158

**Total Expenditure**  
**203,944**

## Teacher Sacked for Wearing Headscarf



*When what you wear is not your choice.....*

## Women Join Street Protest

Women Living Under Muslim Laws  
P.O Box 28445, London, N19 5NZ.  
Email: [admin@wluml.org](mailto:admin@wluml.org). Website: [www.wluml.org](http://www.wluml.org)

<sup>12</sup> Extracts from the WLUML Dress Codes exhibition. <http://www.wluml.org/node/5598>