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- Stop forced sterilization of women in Uzbekistan!

Dear KARAT News Readers !

I would like to draw your attention to important news about the events of 12th International AWID Forum which took place in April in Istanbul, Turkey. Please, take action signing the petition against forced sterilizations of Uzbek women.

I also encourage you to visit KARAT's new website and to post your news on KARAT's Facebook profile. Remember that I am always looking forward to receive your news. Let all the KARAT members know what happens in your country concerning women's issues. Please send me a short paragraph till the end of each month. Have a nice reading !

Agnieszka Walko-Mazurek, KARAT Networking Officer

12th International AWID Forum

Women see the need for economic education

More than 2000 advocates of women's rights from across the globe discussed and strategized around the topic of "Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice" during the 12th International Forum on Women's Rights and Development (AWID Forum) which took place on 19th-22nd of April 2012 in Istanbul, Turkey.

The event held every three or four years is a very important feminist and political forum giving an unique opportunity for women's rights advocates to discuss the problems concerning women worldwide according to their own agenda.

Holding the Forum in a time when economic crisis is spreading across the globe making the governments take austerity measures caused an atmosphere of great determination to make women's angry voices heard. The women expressed their concerns and fears about the coming months and years as the women are the first to be hit by the states' financial cuts on jobs, salaries and social security.

In response to the recent serious deterioration in women's economic situation across the globe, for the first time the women's rights advocates noticed that there is a great need for systematic economic education to empower women to take part in political and economic debates and be among the decision-makers. They agreed that the women should become seriously involved in the economic issues which must be analyzed and understood in the political context.

Although the Forum main topics concerned women's situation in the context of ongoing economic crisis there were many sessions covering a broad range of women's issues like violence against women, women's sexual and reproductive rights, women's engagement in recent political transformations or women's situation in the face of global environmental and climate changes.

More information about the AWID Forum sessions can be also found at [AWID Forum Official Website](#).

For more information please contact Kinga at: kinga.lohmann@karat.org.pl

KARAT: Social and economic rights of marginalized women in Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia

During the AWID Forum KARAT held an interactive debate to reflect about experiences that women have gathered in 20 years of transition from central planned to free market economy and 20 years of neoliberal policies in the region. The participants tried to answer a question how the transformation of economic power relations affected women's economic conditions, particularly marginalized women, control over resources and decision making.

Mirela Arqimandriti from [Gender Alliance for Development Center](#), Albania stressed that during the transition period, many women lost their jobs and were forced to look for new jobs abroad. In the majority of the cases, these jobs did not reflect the level of education and qualifications they had earned in the previous system.



These women often failed to pay social security contributions because of lack of information and insufficient financial means. As a result of not paying these funds for a period of 10 to 15 years these women do not receive pension and are in a very difficult financial situation.

Olga Djanaeva from Rural Women's Association "Alga", Kyrgyzstan gave examples on how the situation of rural women worsen in 20 years of transition. The fall of communism was welcomed by women as it gave them a hope for more freedom, more chances to decide about their own lives. However, the political transition has caused the return of traditional system of values where a status of women in society is very low. Thus, the women have become even less free in their decisions and more economically dependent on men than before. For the rural women who want to take up an economic activity it is difficult to buy the agricultural equipment, fertilizers or good quality seeds as they have much more difficult access to credits than men. They are also discriminated in the access to the state's agricultural programs as these usually target "the head of household" what in practice means "a man". The rural women's economic activity is also hamper by their obligations towards children and household as the political transition caused a fall of social infrastructure and most of the support services that it had provided, including state-supported child care.

Aleksandra Solik from [KARAT](#), Poland talked about a change in women's situation on labor market. As a result of political transition many women became unemployed and were forced to take jobs which did not guarantee the fundamental labor rights. The exploitation of women working in super- and hypermarkets served as an example that illustrated the problem. The lack of job forced many of women to turn to self-employment and informal sector which left them with symbolic or even without social security protection. However, it was an entrepreneurship and self-employment that the government's policy had been focusing on. Aleksandra also discussed a gap between the legislation and practice that exists despite Poland joining EU and thus having adopted the legislation guaranteeing equal rights for women and men on labor market. In practice women are still discriminated *inter alia* when it comes to access to job (e.g. they are asked about family status), pay gap, salaries in professions dominated by women.

For more information please contact Kinga at: kinga.lohmann@karat.org.pl or Aleksandra at: aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl

WIDE Plus: How the European crisis influences the women's lives

The session of WIDE Plus titled "The European Crises" held at AWID Forum brought together the women's rights speakers from the countries strongly affected by the current economic crisis.

During the session speakers from Greece, Italy and Spain shared their experiences on how the governments' austerity measures have dramatically impacted the women's livelihoods and rights there. They stressed that the cuts on salaries have led to situation where a job does not provide enough money for living. The speaker from Germany showed how the tense economic relations between the states gave rise to the stereotypes about Greeks who became perceived very negatively by many Germans. She expressed her concerns that growing economic polarization and inequality between the European states result in a rise of xenophobic and nationalistic views in societies.

The session's debate caused a strong feedback from the audience which shared examples of local actions to influence the governments and stop further financial cuts at the cost of human rights to life (the number of suicides has sharply grown recently), fair salaries and social security. The participants expressed the strong need for cooperation.

The AWID Forum became a good occasion to meet and talk about the strategy and development of European Network WIDE Plus (an initiative for restoration of Women in Development Europe). The women involved in the organization's restoration agreed that the network's activities should focus on the most current problems which European women face, especially in the context of ongoing economic crisis.

For more information please contact Kinga at: kinga.lohmann@karat.org.pl or Aleksandra at: aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl

European Union

Poland: Minister of Justice stands up for traditional values

At the beginning of April 2012, the Polish Minister of Justice, Jaroslaw Gowin, openly opposed the ratification by Poland of the Council of Europe (CoE) [Convention on Preventing and Eliminating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence](#). The text of the Convention has been agreed upon in May 2011 and the document was then opened for signatures. So far, 19 Member States of the CoE have signed the Convention and it has been ratified by one country – Turkey.

The conservative Minister keeps on campaigning against the ratification of the Convention by the Parliament, claiming that its provisions stay in conflict with the traditional values rooted in Polish culture. He also shows his concern that the Convention might be the entry point for adopting the law providing the right to register same-sex partnerships.

The Minister's statement caused strong reactions from the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, who strongly stands for the ratification of the Convention and publicly defends women's right to be free from violence and discrimination.

On 12th of April KARAT's representative, Magda Pohec, took part in the press conference in Sejm (the lower House of Parliament) that was jointly organized with Feminoteka Foundation and Palikot's Movement, which is a left-wing, progressive newcomer to the political scene after elections in 2011. She highlighted that *"private, religion-inspired world views of the Minister must not lead to violating women's human rights in Poland."*

For more information please contact Magda at: magda.pohec@karat.org.pl

Women and climate change

On 20th of April 2012 the European Parliament adopted a new resolution on women and climate change. The resolution recognizes that climate change is not gender-neutral issue, and gender discrimination in addition to its catastrophic effects must be the high priority of the EU policies. The document also calls for ensuring that climate action does not increase gender inequalities but benefits to the everyday situation of women, which are mostly affected by consequences of global warming like floods, droughts, air quakes etc.

The full text of the resolution is available at European Parliament website [HERE](#).

To learn more about links between gender issues and climate change please see one of the KARAT's recent publication on this topic "[Climate Change: Women in Developing Countries, the Hardest Hit](#)"

For more information please contact Marta at: marta.gontarska@karat.org.pl

World

Moldova: Government's report on progress in gender equality policy

The Moldovan government issued the monitoring report on implementation of Action Plan and National Programme on Gender Equality for the period 2010-2015. The report which concerns the actions taken in 2011 was discussed on 3rd of April 2012 at the meeting of the Government Commission for Equality Between Women and Men in Chisinau, Moldova.

Valentina Bodrug-Lungu, the President of Gender-Centrum and a member of Commission, presented information on cases of gender based discrimination in advertising. She stressed the lack of mechanisms to identify and effectively deal with the cases of sexism in mass media and outdoor advertising, and a lack of capacity of broadcasting services to analyze the mass media productions in the context of gender-based stereotypes they transmit. She also paid attention to the problem of excessive bureaucracy which limits the efficiency of protection of the women victims.

For more information please contact Valentina at: gendecentru@gmail.com

Kyrgyzstan: Media campaign to stop bride kidnapping



The „Open Line” organization has launched a social commercial consisted of a series of short films to sensitize the Kyrgyz society to the problem of bride kidnapping.

The films focus on making people aware that a marriage which results from mutual love of a young couple brings happiness to all members of families. Thus, the films target the girls' parents to encourage them to object to this harmful custom and bring their daughters back home in

case of kidnapping. One of the important role of the films is to make people react if they witness a girl's kidnapping by calling the police.

The films are a result of seminar organized by the “Open Line” between March 30th – April 5th 2012. This initiative is one of the series of activities which aim at stopping the bride kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan. For the past five years the awareness raising campaigns have focused mainly on breaking a stereotype that the bride kidnapping is an old Kyrgyz tradition. They have stressed that this is a crime.

The films can be watch at “Open Line” website <http://openline.kg/video/>

For more information please contact Munara at: munarabeknazarova@gmail.com

New partnership between EU and UN Women to increase gender equality worldwide

On 6th of April 2012 a new partnership between the EU and UN Women was signed to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations on their work on empowering women and gender equality. The new Memorandum of Understanding focuses on their closer collaboration to improve women's situation in the economic, political and social spheres of life.

The EU and UN Women will work together to ensure women's representation in decision-making in the fields of economics, politics and justice worldwide, as well as better access for women to work and social opportunities. The organizations declare to cooperate closely in combating sexual and gender-based violence. This will include a commitment to provide more support and protection to survivors of violence and increasing access to support and services for those women affected.

The source: [European Commission Press Release](#)

Resources:

KARAT: Women's Access to Justice. Factsheet

In April 2012 KARAT launched a factsheet „Women's Access to Justice in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia” based on the national reports from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It complements KARAT's initiative aimed at improving women's ability to claim their rights under Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The factsheet highlighting a status of women in the context of the countries' traditional and religious values, shows why the mechanisms provided by Optional Protocol to CEDAW are underused by victims of gender-based discrimination. It stresses the contradiction between the national legislation which guarantees the protection of women's human rights and the reality where discrimination of women is common and accepted behaviours. The factsheet provides a list of barriers that hamper women's access to justice in these countries and a list of recommendations for the governments and CEDAW Committee.

The factsheet “Women's Access to Justice in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia” is available in [English](#) and [Russian](#).

Call for Action

Stop forced sterilization of women in Uzbekistan

Sign the petition to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to stop forced sterilization of women in Uzbekistan.

See details at https://secure.avaaz.org/en/uzbekistan_sterilisation_meme/?cl=1757415443&v=13816

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

KARAT Secretariat would like to sincerely thank the following for their contributions to the News (forwarding information and providing us with 'original' information): Open Line (Kyrgyzstan), Gender Centrum (Moldova), EWL.

Edited by Agnieszka Walko-Mazurek

KARAT Coalition

ul. Rakowiecka 39A/ 14

02 521 Warsaw, Poland

www.karat.org

phone: +48 22 8491647

fax: +48 22 628 20 03

Subscriptions and news contributions are welcomed at: agnieszka.mazurek@karat.org.pl

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