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Dear KARAT News Readers !

This month I would like to draw your attention to good news from CSW 57 where the final document has been signed. It is a big success of all who ceaselessly lobbied their governments for fulfilling their commitments towards women's rights. KARAT is glad that violence against women has been condemned in strong terms and now it is time to make the governments take concrete steps to put the Agreed Conclusions into practice on national level. Please read KARAT and members' news about recent initiatives for advancing women's rights in the Region.

Remember that I am always looking forward to receiving your news (also in Russian), so do not hesitate to write to me at: agnieszka.mazurek@karat.org.pl

Have a nice reading!

Agnieszka Walko-Mazurek, KARAT Networking Officer

KARAT & Members' News

Polish lessons shared with women's rights advocates from Belarus

KARAT in partnership with its member organization Public Association of "Women's Independent Democratic Movement" (PA 'WIDM') organizes a strategic training to help enhancing legal protection of women from discrimination and violence in Belarus. The training is a respond to the current challenges faced by the Belarusian women's movement.

Although the Belarusian authorities included the adoption of the act on equal status of women and men as well as the act on preventing and combating domestic violence in the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2011-2015, no actions have been undertaken so far to improve legal protection of women from discrimination and violence. Thus, there is a justified concern that the authorities would not put enough effort to make it happen. In this context, PA 'WIDM' together with its associate gender-sensitive lawyers decided to draft both laws. The training in Warsaw aims at supporting women's rights advocates from Belarus in this process through presenting model laws by experts in the field and sharing lessons learned in Poland. The training will take place on April 18-21, 2013 in Warsaw and is financially supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Warsaw.

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

KARAT consults the draft of National Programme of Action for Equal Treatment

Despite its international obligations, since 2005 Poland has neither formulated nor implemented any kind of multiyear National Programme of Action for Women. This has had a significant and negative impact on the government's performance in advancing the situation of women. In March 2013 the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment (GPET) has finally released the draft of the National Programme of Action for Equal Treatment for the years 2013-2015 (NPET 2013-2015) that concerns eradication of discrimination on all grounds. The document includes analysis of the situation of groups susceptible to discrimination, identifies problematic areas, defines goals and objectives of the national policy, as well as formulates concrete steps to be taken by the government. In terms of women's rights, there is a strong language on women's participation in politics. The need for the adoption of parity system with 'zipper system' (the alternate order of women and men) on electoral tickets has been highlighted. However, the most burning area of rights' violations which is sexual and reproductive health has been not adequately recognized in the document. Furthermore, the economic status of women with lower levels of education in feminized sectors remains not addressed.

KARAT together with the Polish Coalition for Equal Opportunities has formulated comments on the document which have been submitted to GPET.

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

Five years of work for transgender community in Poland



On March 1, 2013 Trans-Fuzja, a member of KARAT, celebrated their 5th birthday with the event that was attended by their friends, activists, supporters and volunteers, including KARAT. Trans-Fuzja is the only transgender organization in Poland devoted to a wide range of activities aimed at supporting Polish transgender community. The organization provides a counseling, legal advisory and a hot line. Besides, they actively lobby for the rights of transgender people in Polish government. One of their biggest success is having Anna Grodzka – one of the founders of Trans-Fuzja in the Polish Parliament. Thanks to this the topic of transgender people and their rights has found its place in public discussions in Poland.

According to Trans-Fuzja being a part of KARAT Coalition creates an opportunity to reconsider the current cisgender model of thinking about gender equality and move into a more inclusive approach where all gender identities and expressions work towards the end to patriarchal privileges.

For more information please contact Agnieszka at: agnieszka.mazurek@karat.org.pl

Central Asia: Rural women suffer from violence

Forum of women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan held two parallel sessions on violence against women (VAW) in rural areas of Central Asia during the 57th Session of CSW in New York. The sessions held on March 4th and 5th, 2013 attracted a big audience from across the world. The speakers from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan stressed that the elimination and prevention of VAW in rural areas remain absent from mainstream programs, agendas and budgets of the majority of development stakeholders. The rural women are especially vulnerable to violence since living in the remote places seriously limits their access to justice and to professional help which is provided by the crisis centers in the cities. There is also a problem of local police which refuse to act on the pretext of lack of necessary evidence that a crime has been committed. The speakers talked also about the recent successes such as the amendments to Kyrgyz legislation on bride kidnapping. The questions and comments from the audience showed that VAW in other parts of the world follows a similar pattern and the women face similar challenges.



The Feminist League and Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan issued an official statement calling upon States to include budget lines for the elimination and prevention of VAW, to strengthen sanctions for those who violate the women's rights, including the perpetrators of domestic violence and bride kidnapping. They also call upon donors to set up special programs to assist the women's groups in their work on VAW in the countries where development priorities are not inclusive of women's rights and upon international organizations to partner with women's organizations from Central Asia to work together to create a safe life for women, including rural women and girls.

Read the statement in [English](#) or [Russian](#).

For more information please contact Chinara from Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan at: ckartanbaeva@gmail.com

Macedonia: Steps toward ratification of Council of Europe Convention against violence

On March 6, 2013 the national network "Voice Against Violence" organized a workshop on the benefits of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Its participants got familiar with the Convention and form a working group aimed at developing a pre-ratification plan of action. The plan of action will include all necessary steps to be undertaken in order to have the Convention ratified by the State. The women's organizations gathered in the national network "Voice Against Violence" consider the ratification of Convention as crucial for ensuring effective protection for the victims of gender based and domestic violence. Although Macedonian government signed the Convention in July 2011 no steps have been undertaken since then to start the process of its ratification.



The workshop was a part of the project "Advocating for improved policies/strategies on ending violence against women" supported by the local office of UNWOMEN in Skopje.

For more information please contact Nade from Macedonian Association for Development and Integration – MADI at: madimacedonia@gmail.com

Czech Republic: Digital violence from gender perspective

"Gender Studies, o.p.s. Prague is launching a new project titled "Staying safe staying online". The project aims at promoting gender perspective in safe using information and communication technologies (ICT) such as internet. Bringing up the gender aspect as a significant factor in ICT-related abuses is an innovative approach in the Czech Republic.

The issue of digital safety for children has been receiving a lot of attention but the activities for teenage girls and young women are sparse even though these groups tend to use ICT for social interaction more often than boys and are especially vulnerable

to abuse. The amount of erotic pictures and intimate information shared and spread over ICT is rising and gender plays a significant role in ICT-related sexual abuse.

The project will focus on teenagers and young adults and consist of activities such as research among young people, multi-channel media campaign and trainings for lecturers. The activities will take place in three countries – Czech Republic, Poland and Cyprus, thus the issue of cyber violence against women will be discussed from an international perspective.

For more information please contact Anna from Gender Studies, o.p.s. at: anna.kotkova@genderstudies.cz

Poland: Women Diplomats of Warsaw interested in women's rights

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, KARAT was invited by the Embassy of the United States in Warsaw to participate in a meeting of the Women Diplomats of Warsaw (WDW). KARAT took part in a discussion on women's rights and presented its activities at regional and national level. The women diplomats were interested in economic situation of women in Poland and their limited access to abortion. The Ambassador of India, Madame Monika Kapil Mohta, stressed that women should have the right to a choice regardless the country they live in. The diplomats compared the situation of women in Poland and their countries showing high sensitivity to women's rights' violation. KARAT is glad to establish a contact with a community of women diplomats and hope for developing closer relations with them in the future.

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

European Union

EU-wide civil law protection for victims of gender violence

On March 19, 2013 the Legal Affairs and Women's Rights committees of European Parliament approved a law saying that the victims of stalking, harassment or gender-based violence who are granted protection in one EU member state would get fully equivalent protection if they freely move to another EU state. The new EU law would add civil law protection to the criminal law protection already enforced under the European Protection Order (EPO) Directive. This law would eliminate all the formalities currently required to ensure recognition and enforcement of civil protection measures for people under threat who cross the EU's internal borders. The committees recognized that the continuity of specialist support services to victims of gender-based violence as well as specialist training for officials likely to deal with cases of violence against women are the important part of the victims' protection system of EU. This regulation will apply to cross-border cases with effect from January 2015.

Source: [European Parliament](#)

European Parliament: Economic crisis hits women hardest

On March 12, 2013 the European MPs adopted a [non-binding resolution](#) saying that women suffer more than men from crisis-driven budget and social spending cuts, which must be counterbalanced by investing in job training and female entrepreneurship. Parliament points out that cuts in education, childcare and care services have pushed women to work shorter hours or part-time, thereby reducing not only their income but their pensions as well. MEPs say that to restore growth and to reverse the effects of the crisis, member states must invest in lifelong training, re-skilling policies, teleworking and new jobs, promote female entrepreneurship and develop child-care facilities. They must also include women in decision-making and promote gender balance on company boards. Gender stereotypes also contribute to the feminisation of poverty, say MEPs. They persist in the labour market in sectors such as engineering and childcare, leading to occupational segregation and the gender pay gap. They call for measures to combat gender stereotyping in education, from the kindergarten onwards, and in the media, advertising, the labour market and politics. MEPs also insist that the female image should be portrayed in a way that respects women's dignity instead of sexualising girls and women.

Source: [European Parliament](#)

World

CSW: A big success but the work is not yet finished

On March 15, 2013 the governments at the UN adopted an [outcome document](#) at the conclusion of the 2 weeks session of the [UN Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW 57). Following last year's lack of agreement on final document and the huge pressure from conservative forces who tried to block the process, the adoption of an outcome text condemning violence against women (VAW) in strong terms is celebrated as a success. The document calls for increased attention and action for prevention and response to VAW. It places a special focus on prevention, including through education and awareness-raising, and addressing gender inequalities in the political, economic and social spheres. The document highlights the importance of putting in place multi-sectoral services for survivors of violence, including for health, psychological support and counseling, social support in the short and long term. It draws attention to the need for services to protect the right to sexual and reproductive health. Punishment of perpetrators is also highlighted as a critical measure to end impunity.

We witnessed 2 weeks of intense negotiations, in which culture, tradition, and religion have been used to deny women their rights. The conservative states and the Holy See strongly objected to progressive language on women's rights, especially the reproductive ones but there was also a huge global engagement and mobilization, high-profile advocacy by civil society, and determined leadership by many Member States. The prolonging negotiations alarmed the feminist and women's organizations which issued a [statement](#) saying NO to any re-opening of negotiations on the already established international agreements on women's human rights and calling on all governments to demonstrate their commitments to promote, protect and fulfill human rights and fundamental freedoms of women. They stressed that customs, tradition or religious considerations must not be tolerated to justify discrimination and violence against women and girls whether committed by State authorities or by non-state actors.

The CSW reaffirmed previous commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in the Programme of Action at the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation. The feminist and women's organizations are satisfied with its outcome but it is time now to answer the question **how we can ensure that all the positive rules and policies aimed at eliminating VAW are being put into practice at country level?**

Sources: [UN Women](#), [WoMen in New York](#)

UN: Denial of reproductive rights is torture

On February 1, 2013 the [UN Special Rapporteur](#) on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment said in his [report](#) that a denial of abortion can be considered torture. He holds that a denial of reproductive justice is discrimination on the basis of gender and denial of that right can cause "tremendous and lasting physical and emotional suffering" to women. He also says that an access to information about reproductive health is imperative to a woman's ability to exercise reproductive autonomy, and the rights to health and to physical integrity. The report has been welcomed by many women's organizations worldwide which consider it as an important step for moving women's rights forward globally.

Source: [UNHR](#), [Policymic](#)

Resources

AWID: Primer 12: The United Nations Development Cooperation Forum through a women's rights lens

Primer 12 provides an overview of the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). It focuses in on the DCF origins and strategic plans for the future, while emphasizing the importance of the DCF for women's rights and gender equality advocates.

You can download the publication [HERE](#)

UN: Rural women & the Millennium development goals – facts & figures

This factsheet highlights the progress of rural women against key Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicators, pointing to some of the advancements made and gaps that still exist. It suggests that globally, and with only a few exceptions, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men for every MDG indicator for which data are available. While data

collection along these lines has improved in recent years — in part because of increased donor and government interest — there still remains a general lack of data not only disaggregated by sex, but also by rural and urban areas. This has an impact on our global ability to confidently monitor progress toward the MDGs for all people in all regions, urban and rural, and particularly where progress is needed most.

You can download the factsheet [HERE](#)

FRA: Access to justice in cases of discrimination in the EU – Steps to further equality

This report examines the process of seeking redress in cases of discrimination. It provides a detailed analysis of what the EU Member State bodies that deal with cases of discrimination do to support possible victims of discrimination and to offer them redress. It examines the factors obstructing effective remedies, such as the complexity of the complaints system, which discourage people from bringing cases and reinforce victims' feelings of helplessness.

You can download the report [HERE](#)

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): Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, Macedonian Association for Development and Integration – MADI, Gender Studies, o.p.s. from Czech Republic, Trans-Fuzja from Poland, UN Women, AWID, WoMen in New York blog, EWL.

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