

2004 Annual Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WLP completed the following activities between January and December 31st, 2004:

- Strengthen and expanded its relationship with international and regional women's organizations, academic institutions, and women leaders and activists who work with WLP through **partnerships and collaborations**. WLP works in partnership with women's organizations in 14 countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and collaborates with individuals and organizations from over 20 countries around the world. At the Third Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy, February in Durban, South Africa, WLP took a lead role in developing an *International Women's Democracy Network* and became the secretariat of the network.
- Initiated the development of **new prototype NGO capacity-building curricula** that will enable partner organizations to expand their advocacy efforts and outreach and strengthen their institutional capacity to promote women's human rights, civil society building, and democracy.
- Produced **culture-specific multimedia educational materials** including:
 - (i) publication of the **Hausa edition and the Miteilon edition** of *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* and continued the expert review and finalization process for the **Shona, Malay, and Turkish editions** of the handbook prior to publication.
 - (ii) completion of the expert translation of **Russian, Arabic, and Persian multimedia leadership packages** entitled *Leading to Choices: A Multimedia Curriculum for Leadership Learning*. The package is designed to enhance users' facilitation, communication, and advocacy skills through horizontal and participatory leadership techniques.
 - (iii) Completion of a prototype Persian **online distance learning course**, and expansion of Arabic, English and French websites.
- Conducted comprehensive **leadership training workshops** with over 1700 women in Afghanistan, Cameroon, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palestine, Tanzania, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe utilizing the prototype and customized leadership curriculum. Workshop participants include women's rights activists, civil society advocates, journalists, refugees, religious leaders, community activists, teachers and other educators, students, local government officials, housewives, unemployed women, women working in the informal economy and deaf women. Each workshop establishes a cooperative learning environment in which participants develop negotiation, communication, advocacy, and conflict resolution skills using culturally appropriate leadership methodologies. WLP's curricula and method of learning has proved

successful in creating an atmosphere of tolerance, building self-confidence, and honing conflict prevention skills.

- Convened the **Kabul National Training Institute** for Leadership Learning, Kabul, Afghanistan in April, the **International Institute for Women's Leadership** in Beirut, Lebanon in September; and the **Maghreb Regional Learning Institute** for Women's Leadership and Training of Trainers, Marrakech, Morocco in December 2004. WLP also commenced organizing the **Africa Regional Learning Institute** for Women's Leadership and Training of Trainers, which will be held in Calabar, Nigeria in February 2005. The Institutes aim to train women rights activists to become better trainers and advocates for women's leadership and full participation in civil society. .
- Enhanced the **ICT capacity-building program** that enables organizations to increase their access to information technologies that enable them to implement women's empowerment programs, participate in knowledge networks, and create sustainable advocacy and civil-society building efforts. WLP launched **IT Centers in Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and Lebanon** to provide women with computer training, vocational skills building, and other education programs, and implemented a technology training and capacity-building workshop in Palestine. In Afghanistan where a center already exists WLP conducted a trainer or trainers for facilitators while **IT training** was conducted by all WLP's partners engaged in the capacity building program. WLP also conducted a test eCourse as part of its development of a prototype **Persian online distance-learning** course.
- Participated in **Events and Outreach** activities including a series of conferences, symposia, and policy meetings. WLP uses these opportunities to mobilize a broad network of international women leaders, activists, and organizations to promote women's political participation, a peaceful and democratic culture, human rights and women's empowerment. WLP also published four editions of its online e-newsletter that serves as a mobilization and advocacy tool to inform the WLP network about the activities of partner organizations and WLP programs and events.
- Broadened **media outreach activities** through numerous radio and television broadcasts of interviews and print articles that enhance public awareness of the importance of increasing women's power at all levels of decision-making, their full participation in civil society, and the use of ICTs for advocacy and democratization. Organized outreach activities to raise awareness about the Organization, the importance of women's participation in democracy building, and the use of technology for rights advocacy in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

WLP's concept of leadership and methodology for enabling women to reach leadership positions is the bedrock of the network and corresponds to women's vision of economic and social development as a process that leads to gender equality, democracy, peace, and human rights. In this conceptual framework, effective leadership is participatory, communicative, and horizontal. Everyone can be a leader and, at various times, both a leader and a follower. Sharing power and respect for the other is essential for creating group synergy that empowers the individual and mobilizes collective action. The methodology for operationalizing these concepts is based on a system of learning that does not preach or teach, but provides a dialogue-based and interactive environment in which each individual discovers her own ability, becomes part of a pool of communicators that produces ideas and solutions all can relate to, learns how to work toward achieving a shared vision, accepts differences in outlook and approach, and respects diversity. WLP's programs encourage tolerance of diversity as well as participatory and inclusive decision-making.

WLP's framework for transnational cooperation is built around ongoing and continuous communication and full cooperation between partner organizations. WLP's collaboratively designed programs are implemented in 12 countries: Afghanistan, Cameroon, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe. In collaboration with these partner organizations, WLP implements programs that encourage women's leadership, political participation, and social change within a dialogical framework. Furthermore, WLP develops learning materials in cooperation with its partner organizations, tests its materials in workshops attended by its partners' constituents, and facilitates capacity-building and resource exchange among collaborating organizations.

WLP also works with an international network of experts— the International Advisory Council (IAC)— that includes heads of U.N. agencies, leaders of international NGOs, lawyers, scholars, and activists from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Middle East. These experts represent diverse professional, cultural, and religious perspectives. WLP seeks the advice of these experts in analyzing and fine-tuning the social, cultural, political, and gender implications of our programs and learning materials.

To mobilize support for women's rights, social change, and democratic development, WLP builds cross-regional multi-disciplinary networks with civil society organizations, women's groups, academic institutions, and individual activists around the world. At the Third Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy, February 1-4, 2004 in Durban, South Africa, Women's Learning Partnership took a lead role in developing an *International Women's Democracy Network*. Upon recommendations from the "Networking Activists for Women's Rights" workshop at the Assembly, WLP became the Secretariat of the Network. The Network will have regional coordination offices in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. The objective of the network is to support and enhance women's roles and agency in the development of democratic practices and institutions at the community, national, and international levels. The Network will exchange experiences, share best practices, and train others in democracy work; develop and support advocacy campaigns initiated by members at the local, national, and international levels; build

solidarity and support for, individuals and organizations engaged in democracy activism; increase interaction and communication among and between various transnational networks, including those working on women's rights, human rights, peace, and environmental issues.

WLP has initiated several informal consultations and discussions at various international gatherings to engage a wider group of women activists in the Women's Democracy Network and to confer on practical and innovative strategies to expand its impact. The informal consultations were conducted at events such as the Association for Women's Rights in Development meeting in Toronto in April and at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission's (UN ESCWA's) Arab Regional conference held at in Beirut in June. The ideas and suggestions that emerged from these consultations were shared at an international convening of women activists from 14 countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East that was gathered in Beirut in September. The meeting provided a forum to discuss the implementation and resource mobilization for specific initiatives and projects to be undertaken by the Women's Democracy Network. A listserv is being created to enable members of the network to engage in ongoing discussion.

Appendix A includes additional information about WLP's partner organizations, the International Advisory Council.

PROTOTYPE NGO CAPACITY-BUILDING CURRICULA

In response to growing demand from partner organizations, WLP is in the process of developing new culture-specific NGO capacity-building curriculum that will enable organizations to expand their advocacy and outreach and strengthen their institutional capacity to promote women's human rights, civil society building, and democracy.

Based on ongoing research and consultations, WLP has identified the primary areas of focus for the capacity-building modules and initiated the preliminary material development. During this reporting period, WLP conducted background research on articles, books, case studies, and other material that will serve as a guide for the creation of the new curriculum. WLP also worked closely with partner organizations to determine the topics and structure of the curriculum, which will include culturally relevant modules on:

- Fundraising and proposal writing;
- Media outreach and press releases;
- Strategic planning for conferences and events;
- Convening Information Technology (IT) Training of Trainers workshops as well as National and Regional Institutes for Women's Leadership;
- Developing and organizing online distance learning courses; and
- Conducting short-term and long-term evaluations of project impact.

In 2004, WLP started developing a framework for the capacity-building curriculum, which included developing the modules to meet the needs of partner organizations. WLP collected and researched NGO training manuals for the empowerment of women worldwide from other institutions, identified partner institutions for testing the module, and developed a questionnaire for the capacity-building module. The questionnaire was tested by WLP's Moroccan partner, Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), one of the largest and most effective Moroccan women's organizations working to defend and promote women's human rights through education and skills training programs, and to foster equitable policies and social practices. Draft assessment questionnaires for evaluating trainers, organizational growth, and the long-term impact of leadership training were developed during the current reporting period. The questionnaires will be tested at the forthcoming Africa Institute and will become part of the materials for NGO capacity-building. In 2005, WLP will finalize the framework for the capacity-building curriculum and will begin developing each module to meet the needs of partner organizations.

CULTURE-SPECIFIC MULTIMEDIA EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

WLP produces culture-specific, multimedia educational materials that empower women and enable them to develop leadership skills for their full participation in local, regional, and global decision-making. These tools comprise a central part of WLP's leadership curricula and build on the leadership concepts presented in WLP's prototype handbook *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*.

Prototype Leadership Handbook

WLP's prototype leadership handbook *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* is based on the concept that inclusive, horizontal, and participatory leadership empowers women and leads to the development of gender equitable and democratic societies. *Leading to Choices* is used by WLP's partner organizations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East to conduct leadership training workshops for grassroots activists, women's organizations, social service organizations, and professionals who work to empower women and strengthen civil society in the Global South. The innovative handbook curriculum strengthens women's leadership skills and enhances the viability and effectiveness of women's advocacy efforts by engaging workshop participants in their own leadership development and in the creation of culturally-appropriate leadership solutions. The workshops foster cooperation, bridging of differences, and coalition-building among individuals divided along gender, ethnicity, religious, educational, age, and class lines, and enable them to work collaboratively to advance women's rights and engender social change. As workshop participants engage in the activities of their communities, they disseminate the knowledge and skills acquired during the workshops and work towards creating strong civil societies based on ideals of tolerance, gender equity, and social justice.

Throughout 2004, numerous women's and non-governmental organizations, policy makers, and academic institutions contacted WLP requesting a copy of *Leading to Choices* and information about the leadership training program. They included, among others, World YWCA, Women's Edge Coalition, Solidarity Center, Peace Corps, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Vital Voices Global Partnership, and numerous state and international universities, libraries, and embassies. In collaboration with the Coordination Committee for Women's Voluntary Work and the US Embassy in Muscat, Vital Voices used the Arabic edition of *Leading to Choices*, to host a nationwide Leadership Retreat for Women in Oman. The program introduced participants to new communications, leadership and advocacy techniques. This training reached a national network of 100 Omani women leaders, now called Women of Focus. Heba F. El-Shazli, the Deputy Regional Director of The National Democratic Institute's (NDI's) Middle East and North Africa Regional Team used the LTC Persian edition with the Hamyaran NGO Resource Center in Iran and is working to develop a Training of Trainers program based on the LTC methodology.

Customized Local-Language Leadership Handbooks



WLP works with its partner organizations to continually adapt *Leading to Choices* to the specific cultural, religious, economic, and educational conditions of their target communities. Customizing the training materials for specific cultures takes place in three stages. In the first stage, the English prototype handbook is translated into the local language using the simplest and most familiar idiom. WLP engages translators with established bilingual proficiency and with knowledge of women's rights, leadership, and democracy issues to ensure that the information is conveyed in culturally appropriate language. In the second stage, local experts including activists and academicians, as well as participants in workshops that utilize the handbooks, review them for content. Workshop facilitators and participants identify supplementary materials such as religious, folkloric, literary, historical, and legislative texts and current event news items that may be added or substituted in the handbook. In the last stage, the handbooks are amended, enhanced, or abridged based on suggestions obtained through the process of testing and adaptation. The final product is a language, culture, and issue appropriate learning tool covering women's leadership and communication skills for fostering democratic development. Culture-specific editions of *Leading to Choices* have been published in eight languages including **Maghreby-Arabic, Shamy-Arabic, Assamese, French, Hausa, Meiteilon, Persian, Russian, Swahili, and Uzbek.**

During 2004, WLP published the **Hausa** edition of *Leading to Choices* for use in Nigeria and other linguistically appropriate areas of West Africa. The **Meiteilon** edition of *Leading to Choices* was also published during 2004 and is being used in linguistically appropriate areas of northeastern India. In Malaysia, WLP's partner organization has tested the draft **Malay** text and has revised it based on comments of workshop participants. WLP is working with an expert reviewer who was Director of Publishing for Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, the national language and literature development institute of Malaysia. WLP's partner organization in Lebanon is continuing the process of adapting the **Shamy-Arabic** edition to the specific cultural context of its constituents. They are developing new case studies and scenarios to create a specific Lebanese Shamy-Arabic edition of the handbook. The **Turkish** edition of *Leading to Choices* will be published in early 2005. The review of the **Shona** edition of *Leading to Choices* is complete and it is being prepared for publication. The Shona text will be used in workshops in Zimbabwe and other areas of East Africa. Furthermore, the initial draft translation of the **Spanish** edition of *Leading to Choices* is complete and it will be tested with target groups in Nicaragua.



Prototype Multimedia Leadership Learning Package

WLP produces a scenario-based, multimedia-learning package entitled *Leading to Choices: A Multimedia Curriculum for Leadership Learning*. The package is designed to enable facilitators to become more effective in creating interactive workshop settings, and to enable women to

create culturally appropriate leadership solutions and increase the effectiveness of their advocacy for women's human rights. The package includes three learning guides and three companion videotapes that complement the material in WLP's prototype leadership handbook.

The guide *Learning To Facilitate Interactively* contains discussion and role play exercises for developing facilitation techniques that reflect the principles of inclusive and participatory leadership. The accompanying video showcases facilitation techniques used by WLP partners to conduct leadership workshops for women in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The second guide *Communicating for Change* contains exercises for improving personal and organizational communication skills. Its accompanying video focuses on two crucial aspects of communication: developing media messages and conducting media interviews. The third guide *Developing Effective Advocacy Campaigns* contains exercises on defining and carrying out successful advocacy for social change. The video features activists from WLP partner organizations in Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, and Palestine who share their experiences using advocacy strategies to fight violence against women and to promote women's human rights.

In 2004, WLP initiated the development of four linguistic and culture-specific editions of the prototype multimedia package *Leading to Choices* in Arabic, French, Persian, and Russian for use in the Middle East and North Africa, Francophone Africa, Afghanistan and Iran, and Central Asia, respectively. Draft translation of the *Multimedia Curriculum* in Arabic and Persian were tested in the Afghan National Roaming Institute in April 2004. The print materials of the Arabic multimedia package have been translated, adapted, and they have undergone the expert review by a human rights activist, who holds a Masters Degree in Gender, Law, and Development from Birzeit University in Palestine, and a Diploma in Human Rights from Lund University (Sweden). She publishes and lectures on issues of Palestinian women's rights. Transcripts for videos one and two as well as translations of guides one and two of the French multimedia package have been translated and adapted. They are now being reviewed by an expert who was the editor of a journal of anthropology and has translated a number of scholarly texts in the fields of anthropology and sociology. An expert is reviewing them for WLP prior to production. Translation of the Persian print documents is complete and the editor of one of the most prestigious academic Persian journals is reviewing the materials. A draft of two Persian Videos has been dubbed and is being reviewed prior to production. Draft translations and adaptation of all contents of the multimedia curriculum in Russian have been completed and are being prepared for publication. The video transcripts in Russian will be used to produce video and audio materials with sub-title texts in Russian.

Leadership Training Workshops

WLP's partner organizations implement the leadership training program through conducting workshops with women activists, civil society advocates, community leaders, religious leaders, teachers and other educators, students, journalists, and local government officials, among others. Men are included as appropriate to engage them in support of women's empowerment and leadership development. Participants are usually individuals with low income levels or disadvantaged groups in society or people from organizations that work with vulnerable populations. The workshops create secure environments where participants can share experiences and develop an awareness of skills that can help them improve their lives. The training materials promote horizontal, participatory leadership skills and enhance the viability and effectiveness of women's advocacy efforts by engaging workshop participants in their own leadership development and in the creation of culturally appropriate leadership solutions. WLP's curricula and method of learning has proved successful in creating atmospheres of tolerance, building self-confidence, and honing conflict prevention skills. Participants move gradually but consciously from concepts and methods relevant to individual leadership learning to the concepts and methods focusing on the creation of learning organizations and societies.

An increasing number of women are participating in WLP's leadership program: in 2004 more than 1,700 women, and some men, took part in leadership training workshops. There was an increase of over 400 individuals compared to those trained in 2003. This expansion of individuals and organizations that are being reached by non-hierarchical, inclusive leadership methodologies and practices enables the establishment of power sharing arrangements, political and cultural reforms in diverse communities, and advocacy campaigns that promote women's human rights, conflict resolution, and democracy. In 2004, implementation of the leadership program extended to **Nicaragua**. Two test leadership workshops were conducted by the Center for Democratic Participation and Development and El Fondo para el Desarrollo de la Mujer (Cenzontle/Fodem). These sister organizations work to foster women's economic security and political empowerment through micro-credit projects, education, and technical assistance. Workshop participants included women already involved in Cenzontle's Citizenship Building Advocacy Program and Fodem's Credit Program.

Developing Personal Leadership Skills

At the level of individuals WLP's leadership training program inspires women and men to participate in their communities to advance democratic ideals, appreciate diversity, and build tolerance. The training develops leaders who seek gender equity, inclusive, and participatory decision-making. Participants learn how to define their visions at an individual and group level, and they discover the importance of coalition-building in mobilizing for social change. The effectiveness of WLP's leadership program can be gauged in the changes of participant's perceptions after workshops and in the manner that they adapt newly developed participatory leadership styles into their daily lives.



Participants are supported to cultivate effective leadership and communication skills as a means of dealing with challenges in their households, communities, and the wider society. Using scenario-based training facilitators draw upon role models within the societies of the participants to highlight the leadership potential of each individual. In **Zimbabwe**, participants addressed the issues affecting their communities including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, domestic violence, and the need to empower women economically. Drawing on a story of 'Mbuyanehanda', a female hero of Zimbabwe's struggle for independence, male participants were convinced that women could play an important leadership role at all levels of society. One male participant said: **'For women to play effective leadership roles, there is a need to create more activities and training opportunities whereby women and men come together through learning and consultation. This way we can reach a horizontal leadership style that will not only promote gender equality and equity but also justice and development for all.'**

In other countries, WLP leadership curriculum and workshops have increased men's awareness of democratic leadership and decision-making in which women also play a significant role. At a workshop in Katsina, northern **Nigeria**, men participated fully in group exercises even though they were surprised by much of what they learned regarding women's leadership potential. One male participant remarked, **"Before this workshop I thought that women were only meant to be wives and mothers. This training showed me that women can be partners and leaders in our community."** Not only have workshop participants experienced a change in their understanding of effective leadership, another gratifying outcome of the workshop experience is the participant's change in world outlook and self-image. At another workshop in Nigeria a participant summarized the group feeling when she stated, **"If anybody had asked me last week if I am a leader, I would have said 'never' but now my reaction is 'yes, yes, yes, I am a leader.'"**

The positive personal development that occurs was clearly evident at a workshop that was requested by Palestinian refugees in **Lebanon**. These young men and women had taken part in previous workshops and wished to strengthen and enhance their leadership and communication skills further. Facilitators noted that since the previous workshops the women had gained more confidence and were able to express their opinions more effectively. The men now listened more respectfully, and participants clearly enjoyed working together and solving problems through collaborative decision-making. Participants no longer complained about the difficulties they faced but suggested solutions and encouraged one another to become more active in community development projects.



Influencing Positive Changes in Society

The benefits of WLP's leadership program go beyond the individuals that participate in the programs and spread to include family, community, and global decision-making. Through the program WLP creates a network of women activists at the grassroots who promote social,

economic, and cultural changes that serve the needs of not only women but all members of society. Women who participate in these workshops are empowered to play a defining role in encouraging tolerance, conflict resolution, gender equity, democratic governance, and sustainable development in their communities.

WLP leadership training materials and workshops help participants think differently about traditional social norms and to change the way hierarchical social structures influence their personal decisions. Participants are motivated to develop cooperative strategies for addressing communal and national issues that are often not dealt with by traditional government institutions. For example, in Ndop, **Cameroon**, during a workshop women shared their personal and organizational experiences and found areas where they could collaborate for future work. One participant who belonged to a women's group in Ndop invited others to join her group and immediately received new applicants. When another woman requested participants to remain behind after the workshop to create a women's food cooperative they agreed and the '*Ngoketunjia Women's Food Cooperative*' was formed. The objective of the cooperative is generation of income through the sale of assorted farm products and the provision of farm inputs at affordable prices and closer to the farmers. The realization of the cooperative and its effective operation would also ensure employment to many people. One participant summed up the experience well - **"Through discussions we discovered that some women had been leading and leading well. Through group exercises we were able to identify women who have the ability to lead ... and have been leading but unknowingly."**

At times the participants share experiences, which enhance the training by providing real role models that other participants can relate to. This was the case at a workshop held in a very conservative region in **Morocco**. During their discussions, participants were particularly inspired by the story of one participant. Although illiterate, she had a strong desire to go to school and change her life. She succeeded in forming a women's organization that advocates with local authorities to support the right of women to receive an education. Through their solidarity and perseverance, the group succeeded in obtaining funding and donor support. The group has not only achieved success in their advocacy efforts but now also provides literacy classes for women and young girls and boys, as well as developing income-generating projects for rural women.

Workshop participants are challenging conservative religious and cultural values, practices and taboos that have concealed the abuse of women's rights. In **Afghanistan** the leadership workshops created an atmosphere of trust and respect, and participants felt comfortable talking about issues they would not have discussed otherwise. They told of incestuous sexual abuse of young girls by their guardians and the horrible living conditions of widows who are dependent on extended families. In Afghanistan, sexual violence is often aggravated by the widespread use of illegal drugs. Using several sessions from *Leading to Choices* as a model, participants developed plans for a community advocacy program



that would address these issues by promoting women's education, raising awareness about women's rights and the problems of the drug trade, and supporting democracy building efforts.

In northern Nigeria, WLP's partner BAOBAB carried out an evaluation of the leadership training. In addition to self-esteem, which was evident in alumni, participants had become leaders at various levels in their communities. At a community level, BAOBAB was called to intervene in a sexual harassment and assault case within the Obafemi Awolowo University community. In the past, such cases went unreported for fear of stigmatization; however this new spirit of openness reveals a direct result of the leadership training conducted in the community.

Inclusiveness and adaptability of the WLP's leadership program makes the training accessible to groups, which are usually marginalized. Women who first interacted as participants in



workshops of the leadership training have gone on to become facilitators and even to start their own independent leadership training. In northwestern **Malaysia**, WLP's partner organization Women's Development Collective (WDC) conducted a workshop for deaf women. Participants used the draft Malay translation of *Leading to Choices* in the workshop as well as a sign language interpreter. In this workshop, two deaf participants from an earlier

workshop were co-facilitators of the training. At the start several participants, questioned their leadership potential due to their hearing impairment and societal discrimination. However, exposure to the two deaf co-facilitators and through sharing of experiences, participants slowly began to recognize and understand the importance of their role as effective leaders within the deaf community and society. One participant acknowledged, **“I now not only identify myself as a deaf person but also as a deaf woman and a leader.”**

WLP's leadership concept provides a foundation for implementing democratic ideals. Some workshops focus principally on the democratic process and lessons are shared on how democracy enhances the participants ability to influence the public decision-making process. In **Jordan**, one such workshop focused on the characteristics of effective leaders and participatory leadership skills. Participants analyzed the leadership styles of local and regional leaders focusing on women leaders. They discussed the obstacles faced by women seeking political leadership roles and suggested ways that women can best utilize limited resources by strengthening networks, enhancing communication skills, and mobilizing communities to support female candidates. At the conclusion of the workshop, the governor of Aqaba, who had sponsored the workshop and attended several sessions, commented, **“It is important for women to attend such training workshops because it opens doors for them and enables them to become active in public forums and to take part in political processes.”**

Similarly, in **Turkey** the leadership workshop in March 2004 coincided with local elections. Several participants were candidates in the elections and others represented women's groups affiliated with local political parties. Participants found the sections of *Leading to Choices* that dealt with enhancing communication, advocacy, and mobilization skills most useful. They

analyzed the structure of local political parties and religious groups, concluding that while many of them claim to be democratic they still embrace traditional hierarchical practices. **“It will be a slow process to changes these norms,” stated one participant. “But I look forward to the challenge. I believe in the horizontal, participatory leadership styles we learned in the workshop and I think they will revolutionize our society.”**

Capacity Building for Civil Society Organizations and Regional Networks

As a direct result of this inclusive and empowering philosophy at the heart of the leadership program and the nature of WLP’s partnership, individuals have obtained the skills to start organizing around shared visions and goals. That process is a springboard from which women’s organization and other civil society organizations collaborate to advocate for improvements in their social, economic, and political lives.

WLP’s partner organizations have formed alliances with other local, national, and regional organizations and networks to enable effective execution of their goals. In **Uzbekistan**, Women’s Resource Center of Tashkent (TWRC) is preparing to conduct a Regional Trainers Institute for the Central Asia region in 2005. During the preparatory stage, TWRC was faced with numerous challenges as the government cracked down on NGO’s for unrelated economic, political and security upheavals in the country. TWRC decided to partner with Women's Resource Center in Shimkent, **Kazakhstan**, where relative stability would allow the implementation of the Central Asia Institute.



Trainers from WLP’s partner organization in Zimbabwe, Women’s Self Promotion Movement (WSPM), traveled to Kigoma, **Tanzania** during December 2004 and conducted two workshops for Congolese refugee women and representatives of refugee workers. The refugee workers represented international and regional NGOs, community-based organizations and women groups. Organizations like Action Pour la Paix et la Non-violence (APANOVI), Women Promotion Centre (WPC), Women’s Forum and Development (WFD), Umoja wa Wanawake wa Fizi (Uwafi), CEPROF, Socoodefi, World Vision, Ligue de femmes Chrétienne pour la Paix et le Développement (LIFEPADE), Solidarité de Femmes et la non-violence (SOFEVI) and local churches were represented. WSPM gave the coordinator of APANOVI five training handbooks at her request, so that she could continue the leadership training program. WSPM also donated five Swahili *Leading to Choices* handbooks to MWOCACH, an NGO that supports orphans and street children in Kigoma. Coincidentally, one of the women’s groups that participated in the workshops will also be a participant at WLP’s Africa Regional Learning Institute for Women’s Leadership and Trainer of Trainers in Nigeria. The relationships formed during these workshops and Institutes are the basis for future collaboration, which strengthens and broadens the regional network of activists.

The flexibility and adaptability of the leadership program has enabled women in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East to take ownership of their leadership potential and become better advocates for gender equity, women’s human rights, and dynamic civil societies. A participant in a workshop in **India** captured the essence of WLP’s leadership training program when she said; **“I came to know that everyone can be, and is, a leader. This was the first time that I understood the importance of participatory and effective communication, how much it is needed in our community, and what we can accomplish when working together.”** Pictures from leadership workshops conducted by WLP’s partners are included as Appendix B.

National, Regional, and International Institutes for Women Leadership and Training of Trainers



The National, Regional, and International Learning Institutes are where WLP trains trainers and facilitates capacity-building of women leaders including NGO heads of non-governmental and community-based organizations, politicians, staff of partner organizations and other professionals. The Institutes equip participants with advocacy skills for gender equity, social justice, and women's equal participation in civil society as well as leadership skills to enable a greater number of women to take on dynamic leadership roles. The Institutes provide an opportunity for South-South exchange of experience, information, and knowledge among women's rights activists who come from nations that have similar social, political, economic, and cultural conditions. The training at the Institutes enable participants and their local constituents to apply their learning to all spheres of social interaction and decision-making, thus impacting the political, economic, and cultural landscape of their nations, and leading to greater gender equality and strengthening of civil society.

National Training Institute for Leadership Learning, Kabul, Afghanistan

WLP convened the Kabul Training Institute for Leadership Learning from April 9-13, 2004, in Kabul, Afghanistan. The Institute was the product of joint efforts between WLP and its partner organization the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL) to counteract severe political and social discrimination facing women in Afghanistan by helping them gain skills to be more effective advocates for women's rights, social justice, and equal participation in decision-making. The goal of the Institute was to provide training in personal leadership development, facilitation skills, communication techniques, and the development of media and advocacy campaigns. The Institute was a forum for activists and leaders facing similar political, socio-economic, and cultural conditions to exchange experiences, information, and knowledge and to discuss ways to empower Afghan women to participate in decision-making at all levels of society. The draft Persian edition of WLP's multimedia training materials, *Leading to Choices: A Multimedia Curriculum for Leadership Learning*, served as the primary curriculum during the Institute.

Twenty-nine women and one man from seven Afghan provinces and Peshawar, Pakistan took part in the five-day Institute. Participants included representatives from local NGOs, officials from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Public Health, and the Ministry of Education as well as teachers, education administrators, trainers, and community activists involved in women's rights, education, democracy advocacy, and civil society building efforts. Despite security concerns, several participants traveled from provinces outside of Kabul, such as Baghlan, Herat, Faryab, Logar, Nemroz, Nangarhar, and Parvan provinces. The Institute focused primarily on facilitation skills, communications, and advocacy training. Several participants were repatriated Afghan refugees who had lived in refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan during the Taliban regime. They shared stories of how they learned negotiation and flexibility through their experiences of working with government representatives and UN agencies in the camps. Other participants, who had stayed

in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule, developed endurance and survival skills amidst the widespread violence and crumbling infrastructure. Sessions from the *Multimedia Curriculum* enabled Institute facilitators to provide opportunities for participants to work cooperatively and find shared meaning and to learn how to effectively share responsibilities at an organizational level. Participants' varied experiences enriched the sessions as they applied their learning to the various leadership exercises. In small groups, participants analyzed the dynamics of power, redefined leadership in terms of horizontal and participatory interactions, and discussed ways to transform leadership within their organizations, communities, and nations.

At the end of the Institute one participant commented, **“The learning atmosphere at the Institute was so precious to us. We felt free to express our thoughts and opinions and to share experiences. We were able to learn from one another and this made us feel empowered.”** Another participant commented, **“The Institute gave us the tools to be able to work together, build on each other’s knowledge, and cooperatively find solutions to problems facing our society. I hope that more people in Afghanistan learn to work this way—we can bring about so much positive change.”**

International Institute for Women’s Leadership Beirut, Lebanon

WLP organized the **International Institute for Women’s Leadership** in Beirut, Lebanon where WLP partners from 12 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East met for a brainstorming and strategy meeting to strengthen and expand the Partnership’s work. The International Institute was a result of the partners expressed need for closer interaction to facilitate learning amongst members of the network. The Institute was hosted by WLP’s Lebanese partner organization the Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD-A) in September. Twenty-four women NGO leaders, trainers, and program facilitators gathered for an intensive five-day training to improve facilitation and impact of women’s leadership and capacity-building programs. During the Institute, partners articulated a shared vision and strategy for the Partnership to guide future work, exchanged best practices on enhancing women’s leadership capacity at the grassroots, and identified new programs and curricula for future development.



Partners discussed the importance of the WLP network and ways to strengthen linkages within the Partnership. All agreed that the unique value of the WLP Partnership lies in the interactive and dynamic methodology for transnational collaboration that makes possible the creation and implementation of culturally relevant curriculum and training programs for improving the status of women and girls in the Global South. Working in small groups, partners shared with one another specific achievements and challenges faced in implementing the WLP leadership program in their countries. They found that the program is effective in transforming workshop participants’ perceptions of leadership as hierarchical and authoritarian to an understanding of leadership as participatory, egalitarian, and inclusive of others. Partners also reviewed and shared facilitation

techniques including ways to create a trusting environment where all opinions are respected, establish a relationship of equality and cooperation with participants, pose open-ended questions to spark dialogue, and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

Given the success of the leadership program, partners discussed next steps to expand the WLP curriculum. Priority areas identified for material development were new manuals on violence against women and women's reproductive health and women's political and economic empowerment. The development of new learning tools focusing on these issues will be based on WLP's leadership and advocacy concepts and practices that promote horizontal power relations, effective communication, and consensus building. Partners evaluated the impact and discussed the future directions of WLP Institutes for Training of Trainers. They overwhelmingly agreed on the importance of organizing Institutes at both national and regional levels. They also emphasized the importance of ICT training and the need to enhance over the next three years the WLP IT centers and workshops for technology skill building and training of trainers, as well as further development of online distance learning courses for women that focus on participatory leadership skills development and democracy activism.

The partners found the Institute to be an important and successful forum for learning from others' experiences, networking, and strengthening their role in the larger women's movement. As one participant commented, **“I see WLP as a kind of bedrock for all the different aspects of women's rights. The Partnership has the potential to evolve into a movement that includes the diversity of women's issues but is united by a common cause.”** Another participant stated, **“Being part of a network allows my organization access to valuable expertise, sharing experiences, and information exchange.”** WLP set up a listserv so that participants may continue the dialogues initiated at the meeting and further expand their knowledge by sharing with each other information on women's rights, democracy building, leadership, advocacy, and ICTs.

Maghreb Regional Learning Institute

Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP) convened the Maghreb Regional Learning Institute for Women's Leadership and Training of Trainers from December 11-14, 2004, in Marrakech, Morocco. Twenty-six women's rights activists and leaders of women's groups from Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia took part in the Institute. The goal of the Regional Institute was to empower women in the Maghreb region to actively participate as effective leaders and advocates in the decision-making processes that affect their personal, family, community, and national condition. Participants also developed their skills in training grassroots women to be leaders working towards gender equity and human rights for all citizens. The Institute included training in leadership, facilitation, communications, and advocacy skills.

The Institute was organized in cooperation with WLP's Moroccan partner, Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), one of the largest and most effective Moroccan women's organizations working to defend and promote women's human rights through education and skills training programs and through engaging in advocacy for gender equitable policies and social practices. ADFM aims to guarantee and reinforce the rights of women

through advocacy, awareness raising, literacy campaigns, direct assistance, and education, among others.



Institute participants included journalists, educators, children's rights and women's rights organizers, and activists working to promote democracy, human rights, and women's political participation. Participants from Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Sudan, and Tunisia were selected based on the extent and diversity of their outreach within their countries. The Moroccan participants represented non-governmental organizations based in all geographical regions of Morocco and working with women of diverse socioeconomic, professional, and educational

backgrounds. Participants from ADFM were experienced workshop trainers who facilitated sessions in the Institute and also engaged in training of trainers' exercises to enhance their personal facilitation skills.

The Maghreb Regional Learning Institute for Women's Leadership and Training of Trainers consisted of a four-day intensive training on developing skills in participatory leadership, interactive facilitation, effective communication, and advocacy campaign development. The Maghreby-Arabic edition of *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* was the primary curriculum of the Institute. The Institute agenda was developed along three training axes: How to identify and cultivate individual leadership skills? How to effectively communicate for change? and How to build and develop consciousness raising and advocacy plans around a specific cause? Each session of the Institute had a two-fold objective: first, to identify and develop characteristics of participatory and inclusive leadership; and second, to implement a variety of facilitation techniques consistent with the model of participatory leadership where participants not facilitators are at the center of the learning experience.

At the conclusion of the training, one participant summarized her experience at the Institute, "All that I have learned during the Institute will help my organization to do more and accomplish more." Several participating organizations plan to incorporate the horizontal, participatory leadership methodologies into the functioning of their organizations. Others plan to incorporate leadership skills-building projects into existing programs, and a number of organizations will use the facilitation training and leadership-learning materials to conduct leadership training workshops with their constituencies. Many participants suggested that more Leadership and Training of Trainer Institutes be held at community, national, and regional levels.

Participants stressed the importance of skills gained but emphasized the equal significance of networking and forming new relationships. The Institute was the first time that grassroots women activists from the Maghreb region were given the opportunity to meet in a forum specifically designed to encourage them to share experiences and to learn from each other. Participants expressed their hopes to expand their new relationship with WLP and the WLP network.

Full reports for the Kabul National Institute, the Maghreb Regional Institute and the Beirut International Institutes are attached to this report as Appendix C

Information and Communication Technology Capacity-Building Program

WLP and its partners implement an information and communication technology (ICT) capacity-building program to enable women and girls in the Global South to increase their access to knowledge and information on rights, democracy, and leadership, and to become more involved in civil society building in their communities and nations. The program is conducted through IT skills training workshops and through the establishment of IT centers where partners conduct the training and also use the computers for their internal advocacy and communication requirements. Besides acquiring basic computer skills the participants are learning how to use the Internet to enhance their advocacy and communications capabilities.

Technology Training and Capacity-Building

The Harare IT Training Center is managed by WLP's partner, Women's Self-Promotion Movement, and is equipped with ten computers and a multi-purpose printer. In October 2004, the Center trained 26 women and girls from **Zimbabwe** Muslim Women organization (ZMWO) and refugee women groups. They all came from low-income families with low-level educational backgrounds and most of them were unemployed. The majority of the participants had never used computers before and they were introduced to computer hardware and software programs like Windows 98, Excel, PowerPoint and Microsoft. At the end of the training, the participants were better equipped to continue their job search while others were interested in doing more advanced computer courses at the Center. One participant summed up their experience by saying that, **“This training has given us hope for a better and prosperous future”**. The Center's aspiration is to purchase more computers, which would enable it to offer secretarial services that could employ some of those students who complete their training.



WLP's partner in **Cameroon**, Community Education and Development Services (CEDS), conducted an information technology training workshop in Bamenda, Cameroon in October 2004. The training was conducted at the recently established WLP-CEDS IT Center in Bamenda and its objective was to introduce eleven participants to basic computer skills. Eight of the participants had never used a computer before. The training was also beneficial to some members of CEDS staff and volunteers who had not received formal computer training before. Participants were introduced to the computer environment and taught both theoretical and practical exercises in word processing, file management, and Internet communication. The IT Center has reduced CEDS' documentation problems tremendously, and training staff has increased optimal utilization of the Center's resources. Participants from CEDS observed that the Center would be more efficient if computers were upgraded and also through setting up a local area network (LAN) that could subsequently be linked to the Internet for external communication.

WLP partners in **Jordan** continue to hold trainings at the jointly managed WLP IT Center. In **Afghanistan**, the eLearning Center continues to have a positive and dynamic impact on the Herat community. Reports from the field indicate that as a result of previous IT training workshops and computer classes there has been a large increase in requests for technology capacity-building workshops and other training courses from individuals and organizations in the area. The Herat Center is viewed as the primary resource for IT training and leadership skills building in the community. The Center's programs enable women, girls, and men to improve their information and communication technology skills and enhance their knowledge about human rights, democracy, and leadership in order to become fully involved in civil society building in their communities.

WLP in cooperation with the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL) implemented the Information Technology Training of Trainers Workshop in May 2004 in Kabul, Afghanistan. The training enabled participants to improve their technology skills and to learn to use information technology (IT) as a means for women's empowerment and advocacy for human rights. The IT



training was based on the 'learning by doing' methodology with interactive sessions being an integral part in learning through the practicing the new knowledge gained during the training. The IT training was designed as a way for trainers to strengthen their understanding of computer networks, software programs and, more importantly, the training and presentation methodologies that foster effective IT learning among grassroots Afghan women. A full report of the workshop is attached as Appendix D.

In December 2004, WLP established a new joint IT Center in the Middle East. WLP and Collective for Research, Training and Development (CRTD-A) cooperatively established the WLP-CRTD-A Technology Training Center for Women's Empowerment and Capacity-Building in Akkar, **Lebanon**. In **Palestine**, Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) will conduct IT capacity-building workshops. The workshops will be based on the IT capacity-building module for advocacy for women's empowerment, gender justice, and social change by WLP. Three workshops and an evaluation workshop will be conducted for 80 individuals in Qalqielya, Gaza, and Ramallah between December 2004 and May 31, 2005. The workshops aim to improve and increase the capacity of participants to use information technology for advocacy that will empower women, advance gender justice, and promote democratic change in their communities.

Multilingual Websites

The Arabic and English websites that WLP maintains are an important source of information and platform of exchange for women in the Global South. The websites provide culture-, language-, and community-relevant content pertaining to women's leadership, political participation, human rights, and development issues with a particular focus on Muslim women. The websites promote multimedia communication and facilitate both South-South and South-North interaction on gender issues. In 2004, the websites received about 3.5 million hits.

Web statistics indicate that WLP's websites were accessed from over 80 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. There is an increase in the number of visitors to the websites from Muslim countries and there was growth in those accessing the websites from Asia, Europe, and Latin America. The most popular sections of the websites were those that provide facts on women's political participation and economic leadership, comparative charts on family laws in Muslim societies, and information about culture-specific leadership curricula. Those who access WLP's websites consistently are activist organizations, academics, government agencies, and funders. Afghanistan, Brazil, Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Qatar, Pakistan, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates ranked among the top 20 countries accessing the websites during 2004.

WLP completed developing the content for its French website, which will be launched in January 2005. The designing and editing process was completed in 2004. Material that will be featured on the French website include, among others, information about WLP's leadership project and multimedia curricula, gender disaggregated statistics concerning women's political participation and rights, a comparative chart of family laws governing women's rights in Africa and the Middle East, and news items and alerts relating to the promotion of gender equity in the Global South.

E-News

WLP publishes an online quarterly newsletter, the e-news, which informs and updates over 5,000 individuals and organizations in the WLP's network of human rights organizations, women's groups, academic institutions, and individual activists around the world, about the activities of WLP's partner organizations and WLP programs and events. In 2004 WLP published issues 6, 7, 8, and 9. The publications are attached in Appendix F.

Alerts

From time to time WLP issues human rights alerts through its website and online network on matters of significant importance to women's rights, peace, and development. In February 2004, WLP and its partner organization, l'Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), issued an alert reporting that the government of Morocco had adopted a new landmark Family Law supporting women's equality and granting them new rights in marriage and divorce, among others. In April 2001, efforts to pass similar family law reforms had been suspended. The continued advocacy and awareness-raising efforts of women's rights activists, strong backing by

government leaders such as Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi and the personal public support of HM King Mohammed VI contributed to the Commission's decision in favor of a reformed Moroccan Family Law. On February 3, 2004, the Presidents of both houses of Parliament presented the unanimously approved new Family Law.

In November 2004, WLP issued an alert after a colleague and NGO leader on a visit to the United States from Iran revealed the extent of a crackdown on civil society and women's rights organizations. WLP's alert requested members of the network to write to the President of Iran and human rights organizations, condemning the arrest of two women leaders Fereshteh Ghazi, online journalist, and Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh, editor of feminist journal *Farzaneh*, who were arrested within days of each other and denied the right to legal counsel. As a result of international pressure on the Iranian government, Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh and Fereshteh Ghazi were released in December.

WLP continues to receive acclamation for the website content from individuals and organizations worldwide. Peter Maregere wrote; **"Dear Friends, I really cherish the information that you are sending and I am hoping that as a network we are in the position of making the desired change in the advancement of women's rights. Once again thank you for the newsletter."** Martha Lyimo, a paralegal with Arusha Women Legal Aid and Human Rights Centre in Tanzania, said **"Thank you very much for this educational WLP eNews Issue no. 7. I am impressed with the Leadership Training Handbook for Women in Swahili our local language in Tanzania. This is a working tool you have given to me and for the benefit of Tanzanian's community. Thank you very much"**. Brooke Ackerly, an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University, said **"I was inspired to look at your website because of an email from AWID. This website is a wonderful resource. Thank you."** Sana' Al-Khayyat of Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SIGI) in Amman – Jordan wrote, **"As usual, your distinguished work adds to our struggle to improve the situation of women in our world. I am appreciative of your efforts for women in Iraq and Palestine"**. In response to the Moroccan alert Ms. Bangura of Grassroots Empowerment for Self Reliance (GEMS) in Freetown, Sierra Leone wrote, **"Thanks for this information which couldn't have come at a better time for some us women in Africa. We are presently holding consultations all over Sierra Leone to find out what is happening to women in the area of inheritance. What has emerged so far is unbelievable. Women suffer on a daily basis as they are denied the right to inherit either through tradition, culture, or laws which are discriminatory. Thankfully, we are now working with a newly reconstituted Law Reform Commission which is looking at replacing the Family Law with one that includes women's right to inherit. We are presently holding consultations in the capital city and I shall share this information with participants. I am sure they will be energized to work even harder to advocate for much needed changes in the laws. I shall also share this with one of the commissioners at the Law Reform Commission and other female lawyers. Thank you."**

Online Distance Learning Courses

In 2004, WLP implemented a test Persian distance learning course on developing participatory leadership skills. The goal of the prototype course (and the primary challenge) was to develop an

appropriate technology for online learning for Persian speakers that would be universally accessible. The prototype course provided a testing ground to determine the most appropriate information and communication technologies to use in facilitating the Persian course and to solve technical problems in preparation for future courses. Secondly, the test course provided an opportunity to test and refine the newly translated and adapted curriculum in Persian.

Later in the year, WLP started organizing and developing the curriculum for the Persian distance learning course, scheduled to take place early in 2005. Lessons learned from the development of the prototype English (summer 2003) and test Persian (winter/spring 2004) courses, helped to guide the development of this course. WLP identified and trained facilitators who will conduct the Persian eLearning course. Shiva Dolatabadi is prominent children's and women's rights activist from Iran. Sussan Tahmasebi has ten years of experience working with non-governmental organizations in the US and Iran on women's and children's rights. Ms. Tahmasebi was one of the trainers for the test Persian course.

In early September 2004, WLP issued the announcement for the course and received numerous responses from potential participants. The curriculum for the Persian course will be based on feedback from participants, facilitators, and independent experts involved in the test Persian course. The full course will have Persian-speaking participants from Afghanistan and Iran, including leaders, activists, and staff of non-governmental organizations, who will gain the skills to be trainers and facilitators of workshops that promote leadership skills development, women's human rights, and democracy.

Based on the Persian edition of WLP's handbook *Leading to Choices*, the goal of the course is to enable participants to explore inclusive leadership styles and engage in collective decision-making for democracy activism. The course will create an active virtual community of learners who will individually and cooperatively explore ways to apply the skills and knowledge gained in the course at the family, professional, and societal level. The course curriculum is designed to encourage participant interaction using email, websites, online discussion boards, and chat rooms. Furthermore, the course will expand the reach of WLP's leadership materials to women in Iran and Afghanistan who face economic, social, political, or cultural restrictions to their participation in similar programs or community advocacy. The report of the Persian test course is attached as Appendix E

Events and Outreach

WLP participates in conferences, symposia, virtual meetings, and South-North and South-South dialogues through which a broad network of international women leaders, grassroots and human rights activists, academic institutions, human rights organizations, and individual activists around the world interact to promote tolerance, gender equality, social justice, democracy, peace, and human rights. Through this dialogue WLP raises awareness and mobilizes support for women's human rights, cultures of peace, women's empowerment and development, and the importance of women's full participation in civil society.

Outreach to Policy Makers

- Feb 2004 WLP President Mahnaz Afkhami co-convoked a conference in which international women leaders and policy makers came together to plan for the strategic launch of the Global Women's Action Network for Children.
- Feb 2004 Mahnaz Afkhami took part in the Gender, Justice and Globalization Strategy meeting convened by the Association of Women In Development in Budapest, Hungary to analyze and suggest improvements of strategies to alleviate poverty, guarantee equality, promote women's human rights, redirect globalization, and influence governments and private actors.
- May 2004 Mahnaz Afkhami participated in the Steering Committee meeting of the World Movement for Democracy, held in Dublin, Ireland. Ms. Afkhami also met with Ms. Nayla Moawad, member of the Lebanese Parliament and president of the Rene Moawad Foundation based in Beirut, Lebanon.
- July 2004 Ms. Afkhami chaired the Civil Society Plenary and participated in the United Nations Economic and Social Commission's (ESCWA's) Arab Regional Conference, in Beirut, Lebanon. The Conference was convened to review and assess the progress made in Arab women's status ten years after the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. While in Lebanon, Mahnaz Afkhami met with Syrian Minister of Expatriates Bouthaina Shaaban, Jordanian Minister of State and Government Spokesperson Asma Khader, the Palestinian National Authority's Minister of Women's Affairs Zahira Kamal, Afghan Minister of Women's Affairs Habiba Sarabi, President of the Rene Moawad Foundation and Member of the Lebanese Parliament Nayla Moawad, President of the Association for the Advancement of Education Mona Makram-Ebeid, and Director of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World Mona Khalaf, among other women leaders from the Middle East to strategize on ways to shape policy that is responsive to the needs of grassroots women and empowers them to participate actively in civil society and democratic processes.

Oct – Dec 04 Mahnaz Afkhami participated in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Awards judging panel with Princess Basma of Jordan, Dr. Kwesi Botchwey, Executive Chairman of African Development Policy Ownership Initiative and former Finance Minister of Ghana, and Moisés Naím, Editor of Foreign Policy and former Minister of Economy of Venezuela, and attended the ceremony where she presented Hernando Gomes Buendia of Colombia with the Excellence in a Participatory and Inclusive Process Award. During this reporting period, Mahnaz Afkhami met with former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, to discuss plans for organizing an "intercultural dialogue" that would involve 75 women from the MENA region as well as other Muslim majority countries and 75 women from the Americas to include high level political figures, academicians, leaders of the arts world and literature, NGO leaders, and businesswomen to focus on urgent global problems such as violence, poverty, interfaith and ethnic tensions, within the context of human security. On October 21st, Ms. Afkhami conducted a wide ranging dialogue with Queen Farah Pahlavi of Iran within the context of her newly published memoir for an audience of 500 Iranian Americans in the New York area at Queen's College.

Outreach to NGOs

Feb 2004 WLP's Programs Director Rakhee Goyal took part in the World Movement for Democracy's Third Assembly in Durban, South Africa. Ms. Goyal organized and facilitated two workshops during the meeting. The first workshop, entitled "Using New Technologies in NGO Networking," enable participants to discuss the ways they use the Internet and other emerging technologies for knowledge sharing, cooperative learning, and advocacy. As an outcome of the meeting, WLP is working cooperatively with others to create an ICT network to provide ongoing support to democracy activists within the World Movement for Democracy, as well as to all the other democracy networks. The second workshop, entitled "Networking Activists for Women's Rights," provided the opportunity to explore the added value and viability of creating an international women's democracy network that would support women's agency in democracy work. The objective of the network would be to support and enhance women's roles and agency in the development of democratic practices and institutions at the community, national, and international levels.

Jul-Sept 04 Mahnaz Afkhami met with several individuals to discuss strategies for advancing the goals of the Action Network, including Melanne Verveer, Chair of the Board of Directors of Vital Voices; Laura Liswood, Secretary General of the Council of Women World Leaders; and Jean Margaret Smith, Senior Vice President for Public Affairs and Administration of Nickelodeon TV. Ms. Afkhami continued to work closely with the Children's Defense Fund to mobilize support for and initiate the activities of the Global Women's Action Network for Children. She met with Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund,

Vice President of the Aspen Institute, and Elizabeth Lule, Advisor on Population and Reproductive Health of the World Bank, to finalize plans for the launch of the network in a conference to be chaired by Queen Rania of Jordan. Ms. Afkhami also met with Haleh Esfandiary of the Wilson Center, and Bagher Namazee of Hamyaran to plan for a leadership training session for Iranian NGO leaders to be organized in Washington DC by Vital Voices. Ms. Afkhami met with Ivan Doherty, Director of Political Programs for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and Kristin Haffert, Manager of Women Participation Programs at NDI, to discuss possible collaborative efforts on women's political participation. She also met with Julie Shaw of the Urgent Action Fund, Thais Corral of CEMINA– Comunicação, Educação e Informação em Gênero in Brazil, Lydia Alpizar of the Association of Women In Development (AWID), and a number of National Endowment for Democracy fellows to discuss potential collaboration with WLP for future events and projects.

- Oct 2004 Ms. Afkhami met with Mr. Baqer Namazi of Hamyaran, an NGO collaborative in Tehran to discuss a possible training and skills building institute for Iranian NGO leaders to take place in 2005 in Washington. On October 28th, Ms. Afkhami met with Dr. Karmi Hakkak, director of the Persian Center at the University of Maryland and Dr. H. Mehran to discuss initiatives to strengthen Iranian-American Civil Society organizations in the US.
- Dec 2004 Rakhee Goyal, WLP's Projects Director met with women activists and civil society advocates from the North Africa region and started discussions of possible partnerships with the organizations that the activists represented. She also discussed the possibility of a National Leadership Institute in Algeria and that of implementing leadership workshops with activists from Tunisia, Mauritania and Sudan.

Outreach to the Media

- Jul-Sept 04 WLP President Mahnaz Afkhami was interviewed in Persian by Fati Aman, Nazi Azima, and Ali Sajadi of Radio Farda, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and Voice of America about WLP's work on women's leadership and empowerment. Mr. Baharloo of the Voice of America hosted a televised call-in program where Ms. Afkhami spoke on the past, present, and future of women's movement. Ms. Afkhami was interviewed by Judith Latham of Voice of America concerning the concept, methodology, and implementation of WLP's leadership training program. Jessy Chahine of *The Daily Star* in Lebanon interviewed Ms. Afkhami about the work of the WLP collaborative and WLP's International Institute for Women's Leadership, which took place in Beirut, Lebanon from September 24-28, 2004, and published a news article entitled, "Women can do much once they realize their power: Beirut meeting focuses on empowerment of females in region." *New York Times* journalist Lila Azam Zanganeh interviewed Ms. Afkhami about Iranian women authors and their success over the past two years.

Ms. Afkhami also provided an interview to Janet Afary of the *AMEWS Journal* in regards to her oral history memoir, *Women, State, and Society in Iran from 1963-1978*.

- Nov 2004 WLP President Mahnaz Afkhami was interviewed by the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) International on the occasion of International Women's Day. Ms. Afkhami spoke about Muslim women and human rights. WLP President Mahnaz Afkhami was interviewed by Ms. Almasi of "Shahrvand," a Persian journal based in Toronto with a wide readership throughout Canada. Ms. Afkhami discussed democracy and women's human rights in Iran.
- Nov-Dec WLP's Program Associate, Anne Bwomezi is a regular contributor to *The Monitor* a leading daily newspaper in Uganda and she writes a weekly column for *The Uganda Observer* focusing on the democratic transition in the country. During 2004 she wrote several articles for the two publications calling for increased transparency in the democratic transition process as well as increased visibility of women in the leadership of political parties as Uganda takes steps towards multi-party democracy. *The Monitor* also published an interview that Anne gave on Uganda's commitment to democracy and good governance.

Outreach to the Public

- Mar 2004 WLP President Mahnaz Afkhami took part in the international conference "Cairo and Beyond - Reproductive Rights and Culture" held in The Netherlands. A select group of international experts discussed and analyzed the interrelationship of reproductive rights and culture and developed practical solutions and recommendations for how to address issues related to these topics. The event was co-hosted by Agnes van Ardenne, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, and Thoraya Obaid, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- May 2004 Ms. Afkhami took part in a one-day conference co-sponsored by the United Nations Association of Boston and the Women and Public Policy School of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. The conference was entitled "Priority Goals for Women in the 21st Century." Ms. Afkhami spoke on the topic of "Women, Culture, and Human Rights in Muslim Societies." At the event, WLP President Mahnaz Afkhami was presented with a leadership award, which was also given to Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM. Over 200 heads of NGOs, policy makers, academics, and activists attended the event.
- May 2004 WLP President Mahnaz Afkhami also took part in the Iranian American Political Action Committee's 2004 Spring Gala, entitled "Honoring the Accomplishments of Iranian Women." Ms. Afkhami and Mehrangiz Kar were honored for their

achievements and spoke about women's human rights in Iran. Senator Jon S. Corzine (D-NJ) also addressed the gathering of more than 400 people.

- Sep 2004 Ms. Afkhami took part in a four-day conference in New York City, sponsored by the Omega Institute and V-Day, entitled "Women & Power." Ms. Afkhami gave a presentation on the topic of "Faith and Feminism." Other speakers on the interfaith panel included Reverend Kanyere Eaton, Executive Director of The Sister Fund and Associate Minister at the Redeemed Church of Jesus Christ in Mount Vernon, New York, and Rabbi Donna Berman, Executive Director of the Charter Oak Cultural Center in Hartford, Connecticut. Over a thousand women participated in this conference, which was a gathering for women to redefine power and leadership.
- Nov 2004 WLP and the Association for Middle East Women's Studies co-sponsored a special session entitled 'Women's Movements in an Era of Globalization: Challenges, Opportunities, Strategies, during the 2004 annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in San Francisco, California. The session focused on the status of women in a fast changing world and discussed the challenges presented by the new technological, economic, cultural and political realities of a globalized world.