

2005 Annual Report



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WLP 2005 Annual Report

Table of Contents

I. <u>Executive Summary</u>	3
II. <u>The Partnership Concept</u>	5
III. <u>Curriculum Development Program</u>	6
<u>Leading to Choices</u>	6
<u>New Manuals</u>	7
<u>Translation Series</u>	7
IV. <u>Training Program</u>	8
<u>Leadership Training Workshops</u>	8
<u>National and Regional Institutes</u>	15
<u>eCourses</u>	17
V. <u>Capacity Building Program</u>	18
<u>ICT Centers and Training</u>	18
<u>Multimedia Resources and Communication Tools</u>	19
VI. <u>Advocacy and Networking Program</u>	
<u>New Partners</u>	21
<u>Communications</u>	22
<u>Outreach</u>	22
VII. <u>Principal Risks</u>	25

I. Executive Summary

Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP) celebrated five years of successful implementation of programs to empower women in the Global South. WLP's vision and mission are embedded in the strong belief that women, working in partnership, will learn the skills and implement the strategies needed to secure human rights, contribute to the development of their communities, and ultimately create a more peaceful world. WLP's partnership network now includes women's organizations in 18 countries – Afghanistan, Brazil, Cameroon, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palestine, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe. Our focus, initially on Muslim-majority societies, has expanded to include the developing world.

Our leadership training curriculum has been culturally adapted and translated into 17 languages – Arabic (Shamy), Arabic (Maghreby), Assamese, English, French, Hausa, Bahasa Indonesian, Malay, Meiteilon, Portuguese, Persian, Russian, Shona, Spanish, Swahili, Turkish, and Uzbek. In the past year, over 1300 women and a small number of men participated in WLP's leadership training program and several hundreds benefited from the IT skills program. International decision-makers and human rights organizations invited us to share our vision of how women can lead the way to peaceful, egalitarian, and just societies. WLP launched a Translation Series to make available to the developed and developing worlds works of importance on the status of women produced in the Global South. Through our interactive conferences, alternative media, and portal, we have become a point at which activist and grassroots women connect and South-South and South-North dialogue occurs.

WLP completed the following programs and activities between January and December 31st 2005:

Advanced 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, and democracy. Initiated development of a **new prototype political participation curriculum** that will provide tools for women's participation in political processes as candidates and proponents for women's rights.

- Published **Malay, Shona, and Spanish** editions of *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* and advanced the process of testing and adapting a culture-specific edition of the handbook in **Turkish**
- Published the **Persian** edition of *Leading to Choices: A Multimedia Curriculum for Leadership Learning* and completed expert review of transcripts of all components of the **Russian** and **Arabic** prototypes and some components of the **French** prototype **multimedia curriculum**.

- Launched the first volume of the **WLP Translation Series, *Guide to Equality in the Family in the Maghreb***, at a series of promotional events. The Guide is a unique advocacy tool for the reform of family law in Muslim-majority societies. The goal of the series is to make available to the developed and developing worlds works of importance on the status of women produced in the Global South that lucidly define women's issues, identify fields of opportunity and map out strategies to empower women and to promote women's human rights.
- Implemented **comprehensive leadership training workshops** for women in seventeen countries – **Afghanistan, Brazil, Cameroon, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe** – utilizing the prototype and customized leadership curriculum. More than 1300 women and some men participated in the leadership training workshops.
- Convened five **Learning Institutes for Women's Leadership and Training of Trainers**: **Africa Region** in Calabar, Nigeria (February 2005); **Central Asia Region**, in Asel-Akun Jabarly, Kazakhstan (September 2005); **Middle East-Gulf Region** in Beirut, Lebanon (November 2005); **Persian Region (Iran)** Bangkok, Thailand (October 2005); and an **International Institute/Transnational Convening** (Bangkok, Thailand, October 2005). The Institutes support women's rights activists to become better trainers and advocates for women's leadership and full participation in civil society.
- Developed a 2006-2010 **Sustainability Plan entitled "Building Partnerships for Change"** based on our main objectives: to build the capacity of individuals, organizations, and networks by creating quality curriculum and programs, while strengthening relationships so that our joint growth in terms of influence and impact can transform the lives of women in the Global South.
- Established a **Secretariat for the International Women's Democracy Network** for information exchange to share best practice for promoting women's participation in democratic development ahead of the World Movement for Democracy's 4th Assembly in Istanbul, Turkey, April 2006.
- Conducted a Persian **online distance learning course** for Iranian women's rights activists and implemented a prototype Arabic **online distance learning course** for women's rights activists in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine.
- Organized **Information Technology Training Workshops** in **Afghanistan, Cameroon, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Zimbabwe**. WLP also **established and/or equipped new IT Centers** in **Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine**. IT Centers are jointly established with partner organizations to promote the use of the Internet as a tool for advocacy and equip participants with basic computer training for their empowerment.

- WLP enhanced its **multimedia communication tools** by overhauling its multilingual websites and creating the *Leading To Choices* portal. WLP strengthened the process of building ICT capacity in partner organizations, and incorporated an ICT strategy into the WLP 2006-2010 Sustainability Plan and three-year Operational Plan.
- Conducted **outreach activities** to raise awareness about WLP programs for the empowerment of women, the importance of women’s participation in democracy building, and the use of technology for women’s rights advocacy in the Global South. Convened an **international symposium entitled “Leading to Change: Eliminating Violence Against Women in Muslim Societies”** in New York on March 1, 2005 and published a **Five-Year Report entitled “When Women Lead, Change Follows”** in celebration of five years of empowering women in the Global South.

II. The Partnership Concept

Women’s Learning Partnership started with three partner organizations in Palestine, Jordan, and Morocco and has grown to include partner organizations in 18 countries – Afghanistan, Brazil, Cameroon, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palestine, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe.

Key to WLP’s effectiveness in achieving widespread, sustainable change is its collaboration with other organizations. WLP activities strengthen the leadership capacity of partners and other groups in over 25 countries, who in turn mobilize hundreds of local leaders, who in turn transform thousands of grassroots community members into strong, motivated advocates. Each person touched by WLP’s egalitarian leadership approach is able and eager to share it with many others. The result is change on a grand scale, set in motion by a few.

WLP consists of WLP International, based in Bethesda, Maryland, USA, and national or regional WLP partners, the hubs through which jointly developed knowledge is disseminated in workshops, eCourses, and Institutes for Women’s Leadership and Training of Trainers. While each partner is autonomous and independent, they share the values and aspirations of the Partnership as a whole, in particular the promotion of an egalitarian view of leadership that values individual skills and contributions in a participatory fashion. The national presence of partners is invaluable. Through close relationships between WLP and partners, curriculum can be tested and adapted; programs implemented and evaluated for impact; and the women’s movement strengthened. Partners provide the culture-specific case studies that make our curriculum such a unique and rich resource for women’s rights activists.



WLP International builds the capacity of partner organizations to enable them to cope with increasing demand for WLP programs at the grassroots. Capacity building is a crucial component of the Partnership, supporting all of our cooperative activities. With sufficient capacity to implement expanded programs and to use technologies in training and information dissemination, partners are better able to sustain the impetus

required to build a strong women’s movement in the Global South.

WLP also works with an International Advisory Council (IAC) that includes heads of UN 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 socio-cultural, political, and gender implications of our programs and learning materials. **Appendix A** includes additional information about WLP’s partner organizations and the International Advisory Council.

III. Curriculum Development

A. Leading to Choices Manual

WLP creates participatory, inclusive, horizontal, and culture-specific leadership learning tools such as *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*, the core curriculum for the Partnership.

Culture-specific editions of *Leading to Choices* are currently available in: **English, Maghreby-Arabic, Shamy-Arabic, Assamese, French, Hausa, Malay, Meiteilon, Persian, Russian, Shona, Spanish, Swahili, and Uzbek.** Editions in the following languages are forthcoming: **Bahasa Indonesian, Kokborok, Portuguese, Turkish, and Tagalog.** The handbooks are used in workshops that empower women and girls and enable them to develop the necessary skills for their full participation in local, regional, and global decision-making.



During 2005, WLP published **Malay, Shona, and Spanish** editions of *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* and advanced the process of testing and adapting culture-specific editions of the handbook in **Portuguese and Turkish.** Additionally, WLP published the Persian edition of *Leading to Choices: A*

Multimedia Curriculum for Leadership Learning. The pilot was tested at the Persian Training of Trainers for Women's Leadership and Capacity Building for Iranian Women in October 2005. An expert completed translation of the guides and overview booklets in the Russian edition of the multimedia curriculum, which were tested at the Central Asia Institute for cultural appropriateness and accuracy in conveying concepts related to gender and leadership.

WLP continued to receive positive feedback about the leadership curriculum from users around the world. Martha Lyimo, Coordinator of Arusha Women's Legal Aid and Human Rights Center in Arusha, Tanzania said, "I am impressed with the Swahili edition of the leadership training handbook. This is a working tool that will benefit Tanzanian communities." Nimat Hafez Barazangi, a Fulbright scholar, thanked WLP for the Arabic editions of the manual saying, "Your efforts uplift the condition of women all over the world. I am particularly happy to see translations in a number of crucial languages, including Arabic."

B. New Manuals

During 2005, WLP started developing new manuals to complement the core leadership curriculum. The **ICT Capacity for Advocacy** manual will enable trainers to teach basic ICT skills, as well as ways in which technology can be used creatively to support advocacy efforts. An **Organizational Capacity Building** manual will address organizational development, program evaluation, and innovative forms of training delivery. It will support internal staff training as well as external capacity building efforts. The **Political Participation** manual will support efforts to empower women as voters, political candidates, and campaign supporters.

C. Translation Series

WLP published the first volume in the new Translation Series in 2005. The goal of the series is to make available to the developed and developing worlds works of importance to women produced in Muslim-majority societies that lucidly define women's issues, identify fields of opportunity and map out strategies to empower women and promote women's human rights. The first volume in WLP's Translation Series, *Guide to Equality in the Family in the Maghreb*, is an innovative advocacy tool for reform of the family law in Muslim-majority societies. The Guide outlines a process that relates meaningful social change to women's capability to make deliberate and thoughtful choices. Family law in Muslim-majority societies governs every aspect of a woman's life - from minimum age and conditions of marriage, to divorce, child custody, and the right to work, travel, or decide on a place of residence. The reform of family law is therefore crucial to women's ability to participate on equal terms in both family life and public life. In each thematic module, the Guide presents the current state of the law, then proposes religious, human rights, sociological, and domestic legal arguments for reform, well-supported by relevant data. Although the Guide was developed with the Maghreb region in mind, many of the arguments presented are applicable in other Muslim-majority societies. WLP's

Malaysian partner is already using the English version to inform advocacy for legislative reform of family law in Malaysia.

Over 150 participants attended a launch event and panel discussion on legislative reform in Muslim-majority societies at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, in Washington DC on November 17, 2005. WLP President Mahnaz Afkhami; Zainah Anwar, Executive Director of Sisters in Islam and former member of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia; Azar Nafisi, Director of the SAIS Dialogue Project at Johns Hopkins University; and Rabéa Naciri, board member and former President of Collectif 95 Maghreb-Egalité, spoke at the panel. A full report of the launch at Johns Hopkins is attached in **Appendix B**.



A second launch event for the Guide took place at the Middle East Studies Association's Annual Meeting at a panel discussion entitled 'Violence Against Women: A Human Security Perspective,' on November 21, 2005 in Washington DC. Leading scholar-activists from Muslim-majority societies spoke at the session: Nawal Ammar, Professor of Justice Studies at Kent State University; Zainah Anwar; Rabéa Naciri; and Mahnaz Afkhami.

IV. Training Program

A. Leadership Training Workshops

WLP conducted leadership training in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America through interactive *Leading to Choices* leadership workshops. Participants included women activists, academics, domestic workers, factory workers, NGO leaders, politicians, refugees, students, indigenous women, and women with disabilities. *Leading to Choices* leadership workshops are guided by a participatory leadership methodology designed to empower women, enabling them to develop the leadership skills to transform their families, communities, and societies. The workshops improve participants' ability to communicate, listen, build consensus, and work in partnership with allies to develop a shared vision and implement an action plan. They are based on the belief that everyone can be a leader and, at various times, both a leader and a follower. Sharing power and



respect creates a strong group identity that both empowers individuals to achieve personal goals and mobilizes the group for collective action.

Workshops have enabled women to develop strong leadership and communication skills, built their self-confidence, and supported collective action. Participants in WLP trainings have gone on to change the division of labor in their families, take on new responsibility at work, run for local office, establish food cooperatives and other economic projects, and coordinate campaigns, among other activities. During 2005 more than 1,300 women and some men took part in *Leading to Choices* leadership training workshops in **Afghanistan, Brazil, Cameroon, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe**. Assessment of reports from the leadership training workshops reveals the manner in which training is changing the lives of grassroots women.

Embracing Diversity and Serving Disadvantaged Groups

WLP's leadership training emphasizes tolerance and respect for diversity in multicultural societies, particularly amongst disadvantaged populations. Positive changes in attitudes and behavior were observed during leadership workshops. In **Lebanon**, refugees from Palestine began a workshop pessimistic about their predicament. They all dreamed of leaving Lebanon to return to their homeland. Through group exercises participants were encouraged to open up and engage in debate with others and develop arguments for their position on community issues. They learned to make collaborative decisions through exercising tolerance and mutual respect for one another.

In Mardin, **Turkey**, Kurdish women participated in a leadership workshop and discussed concerns about issues of prejudice resulting from their minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds. While sharing their experiences they focused on their common problems and found that their neighborhood had many immigrants with unique needs. They agreed to organize visits to determine the needs of women and children in the area and based on that information to start a cooperative effort to address those needs. At the end of the workshop, one participant remarked, "I learned that working together is more effective than working alone. Cooperation in a structured manner yields better results."



Zambia is host to thousands of refugees who escaped the fighting in neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. WLP's partner in Zimbabwe conducted workshops for refugee women in Lusaka, Zambia. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences in a supportive and inclusive learning environment. They considered themselves powerless in a foreign country where refugee status had taken away their ability to influence political decisions or

to access political power. Participants discussed the effects of violence and conflict on their lives and the need to create networks of support at local and regional levels. They learned to make collaborative decisions and to plan advocacy campaigns. During the course of the workshop participants gained the confidence to start turning their dreams into feasible goals. One participant remarked, “This workshop was so helpful in the sense that I regained confidence in myself and I will turn my vision of serving disadvantaged women and children into reality.”

Targeting Youth as Future Leaders

WLP partners are increasingly targeting youth as participants in leadership training workshops in order to introduce them to a culture of participatory, horizontal leadership. Leadership training enables young women and men to develop an egalitarian outlook and gender sensitive approach in their daily interactions and in community decision making. In Tulkarem, **Palestine**, the relationship between male and female participants improved and they gained respect for each other’s views. One male participant said, “I come from a village and never had a chance to interact with youth groups other than at university. This forum provided me with the opportunity to get to know what it is like to be part of a team, to express my ideas, listen to others’ views, and talk to young women.” In Ramallah, Palestine, male and female university student participants did not identify themselves as leaders at first because they thought of leaders as famous politicians. The training helped them to open up and they resolved to add leadership training to their own youth group’s workshops as a way of empowering more young people to recognize their leadership potential. A female participant said, “My vision now is to make a difference in the lives of other young women. I am planning to do something to advance the role of young women at the university.”

At the Medical College of Akhunbabaev in Tashkent, **Uzbekistan**, a leadership workshop provided a forum for students to speak about topics that are usually taboo, such as forced marriages, bride kidnapping, and domestic violence. At first the young men were passive and did not contribute to the discussion, but as the workshop progressed they started responding and participating more openly. They also started shaping their views of what a leader is, or should be, according to the horizontal leadership concept. One participant said, “A leader is a person who can gather people to discuss common problems and reach decisions with the contribution and support of those people.” Participants requested that the leadership program be implemented through the college education curriculum so that all their colleagues in college could benefit from the training.



At a leadership training workshop on the Obafemi Awolowo University Campus in Ile Ife, **Nigeria**, young female participants worked together to form a shared vision for themselves and their country. They aspired to create a society where there is equity, peace, prosperity, and sustainable development; a society where every individual is a stakeholder in governance. From these broad goals they formulated a vision statement: “A society where the interests of young people are respected and their rights are not infringed.” Participants agreed to work with WLP partner BAOBAB for Women’s Human Rights on a project to create awareness of the rights of female Muslim university students and to address the issue of dress code on the university campus, with those who refused to adhere to the code labeled as infidels. Participants agreed to devise a strategy to get more female students elected into students’ associations as part of taking up leadership roles. Participants also discussed the importance of speaking up about cases of rape and sexual assault in order to deter potential rapists. As a follow up to the training, one of the participants was invited to a national discussion on Shari’a and women’s human rights organized by BAOBAB in the nation’s capital Abuja in November 2005.

Enabling Women to Participate in the Socio-Political Discourse

Leadership training workshops provide an enabling environment for participants to discuss social and political events that affect their lives and to find sustainable solutions for the development of their communities. In **Cameroon** overall adult literacy stands at 68%, with 77% literacy for men and only 60% for women. WLP works with Cameroonian partner Community Education and Development Services (CEDS) to empower women in areas where literacy levels are especially low. One workshop participant remarked that she had never held a pen to write anything down since leaving primary school 30 years ago. Participants were introduced to the concept of horizontal leadership and the benefits of dialogue and active listening. Two participants – an aspiring mayoral candidate, and a candidate for parliament in the next elections – said they had gained a great deal from the leadership training and the skills would be useful in preparing for their political campaigns.

The status of women in **Egypt** is linked to the dichotomy of conflicting aspirations for modernization and democracy on the one hand and traditional cultural identities on the other. This has resulted in the spread of a cultural dualism, where values such as freedom, democracy, and women’s rights are pitted against a patriarchal culture that is not in harmony with the spirit of equality. WLP partner Forum for Women in Development held its first leadership training workshop in Cairo using the Shamy-Arabic edition of *Leading to Choices*. Among the social problems identified by participants were prejudice against late marriages for women and lack of women’s political participation. They also identified harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and discrimination against women in nationality laws as critical problems facing their society. At the end of the workshop, seven participants agreed to work together to create awareness about the reasons for late marriages in order to counter the stigma faced by women who marry late in life.



WLP's partner organization in **India**, Centre for Organization, Research & Education (CORE), convened a leadership training workshop with partner organization Nagram POP in Imphal, Manipur. This partnership was formed to address the spread of HIV/AIDS among the people from this hill area. While discussing exercises from *Leading to Choices*, participants created a role play exercise to

address the HIV/AIDS problem in the area. Volunteers served as observers and provided feedback and suggestions on how the role play participants addressed the problem and presented it to others. This exercise led to strategies on how to work cooperatively with people with diverse ideas and visions. One participant concluded, "We can work together even if we have lots of different ideas. We just need to understand each other and see the positive qualities that each person brings to reaching our common goals."

Zimbabwe continues to experience a complex humanitarian situation. The ongoing economic decline and depleted capacity in the social service sectors have severely compromised people's well-being. Additionally, Operation 'Restore Order', launched by the government in 2005, resulted in an estimated 700,000 people losing their livelihoods. Participants in leadership training in Zimbabwe who were affected by the 'clean-up' campaign used the workshops to explore solutions for their predicament. They proposed approaching the Zimbabwean Vice President to ask her why the operation was targeting poor, disadvantaged women. Participants said the feminization of poverty forced women to turn to prostitution for survival, where they encounter the dangers of HIV/AIDS. They expressed a desire to acquire computer and ICT skills in order to qualify for jobs and to gain financial independence.

Empowering Women to Lead Productive Lives

WLP leadership training workshops have motivated participants to establish income generating projects that give women financial independence and projects that empower women to participate in meaningful community activities outside their homes. At the start of a workshop in Herat, **Afghanistan**, participants shared stories about instances when they acted to help others. One participant narrated a story of how she had found jobs for women in her neighborhood during the Taliban regime so that they could support their families. A teacher related how she had supported an exceptional student to remain in school by buying her a sewing machine to support herself through tailoring.

In **Mauritania**, WLP partner Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille (AFCF) conducted workshops in the Gorgol region where women are isolated from networks of women's organizations and have very limited access to ICTs, including telephones. Poverty levels in the region are very high, as a result of economic migration, the damage done by locusts, and the lack of training in small-scale income-generating projects. AFCF committed to coordinating a new network of women's organizations within the Gorgol region, providing training and facilitating exchange of information between members. Participants agreed to begin creating income-generating projects to improve women's economic status.



Manual Development, Capacity Building and Networking

WLP's curriculum is continuously adapted to local conditions in order to remain relevant and useful to participants in a specific geographical location and cultural environment. Leadership training workshops provide the ideal environment for testing manuals and finding case studies for the manuals. The workshops also provide partner organizations with space to develop their own training materials, build organizational capacity and create national networks to promote women's causes.



Brazilian partner Cidadania, Estudo, Pesquisa, Informação e Ação (Cepia) carried out one test workshop for 19 participants using the new Portuguese edition of *Leading to Choices*. Cepia selected a diverse group of women to participate in the test workshop, ranging from 20 to 64 years of age, both white and afro-american, with approximately 50% educated to secondary level and 50% to tertiary level. Cepia focused on selecting women employed in the public sector, such as the fields of health, education, and

sanitation, with the capacity to disseminate the methodology learned at work. On the basis of feedback gathered at the test workshop and facilitators' experiences with the curriculum, Cepia completed the adaptation process. Several new case studies relevant to the Brazilian context were added, including one addressing women's leadership in rural areas, one looking at legislative reform to advance women's rights in Brazil, and one looking at campaigns to ensure a sufficient response to flooding in Rio. Cepia also suggested that a 'live' session on using the Internet be incorporated into future workshops. The Portuguese edition of *Leading to Choices* will be released in 2006.

One test leadership workshop using the Bahasa Indonesian edition of *Leading to Choices* was conducted in **Indonesia** by The Foundation for Sustainable Living (FSL). The Executive Director of FSL was a participant in WLP's prototype English distance learning course on leadership training in 2003. Since then, he maintained a keen interest in the work of WLP and in cooperation with WLP has translated *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* into Bahasa Indonesian. FSL tested the initial draft with a group of ten participants, all of whom were university educated. Five were government officials, four were NGO activists, and one an entrepreneur. They were of different ethnicities and religions, ranging in age from 30 to 40 years. Due to negative cultural perceptions of openly presenting oneself as a leader, most of the participants were uncomfortable at first. However, the case study based methodology and the participatory approach quickly put the participants at ease. The workshop enabled the final adaptation of the Bahasa Indonesian manual, which will be released in 2006.

WLP's partner in **Malaysia**, the Women's Development Collective (WDC), put the *Leading to Choices* curriculum to immediate use by holding a press conference to commemorate International Women's Day as part of a leadership workshop. The press conference provided participants with an opportunity to apply the skills they had gained on effective communication. Prior to the press conference, they practiced a role play on the meaning of good leadership, which informed their presentation to the press. The press conference was aired by a local government television station and printed by three local newspapers.

WLP's **Moroccan** partner Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM) introduced a new strategy for workshop implementation, organizing two complementary workshops for the same participant group in Rabat. The first workshop provided a strong grounding in the *Leading to Choices* methodology of participatory leadership, while the second explored challenges facing women and women's organizations in Morocco in more detail. In the second workshop, ADFM introduced many of their own materials, including their manual on sexual harassment, case study presentations of the ANARUZ network to combat domestic violence and of a communications initiative on NGOs and citizen participation, and materials describing the structure of the organization. Participants were able to apply participatory leadership skills productively to analyze ADFM's work. ADFM plans to train some of the participants as future facilitators for *Leading to Choices* workshops. ADFM used this workshop successfully to build the capacity of the participants as individuals, as well as the capacity of the organization as a whole.

A summary of leadership training workshops conducted in 2005 is attached to this report in **Appendix C**.

B. National and Regional Institutes for Women Leadership and Training of Trainers



The goal of WLP's Learning Institutes for Women's Leadership and Training of Trainers is to enable national and regional women NGO leaders to strengthen their skills in training facilitation, effective communication, and strategic advocacy. Institute participants go on to share their learning with their national and local partners through leadership workshops and participation in networks. Institutes bring together diverse groups of women

NGO leaders, enabling participants to develop new connections and build stronger alliances at the national and regional levels. WLP convened four Institutes during 2005.

Regional Networks for Women's Empowerment

In February 2005, twenty-five women from eight African countries, Cameroon Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, participated in the **Africa** Regional Learning Institute in Calabar, Nigeria. Following the Institute, participants from Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (KIND) agreed to collaborate with those of WLP partner, BAOBAB, to train KIND's facilitators for a university women's leadership program in Nigeria. Additionally, participants from Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone reunited in Accra, Ghana in June 2005 and worked together to support the campaign effort of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who became Africa's first woman President. Sierra Leonean participants in the Africa Institute said the leadership model of the Institute would be valuable to incorporate into the workings of coalitions in Sierra Leone including the West Africa Civil Society Forum Coalition. Three months after the Africa Regional Institute, WLP received news that Institute participant Daphne Olu-Williams was appointed Chairperson for the West African Civil Society Forum-Sierra Leone Chapter. A second participant, Christiana Thorpe, was appointed National Electoral Commissioner in Sierra Leone. She is the first woman to hold such a position.

At the **Central Asia** Institute in Asel, Kazakhstan, in August 2005, NGO leaders from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, laid a foundation for cooperation, partnerships, and coalitions for common goals and objectives. Central Asian countries decided to tackle the challenges posed by the political climate in the region by supporting one another.



For example, participants from the Kyrgyz Republic suggested creating a partnership with NGOs from Uzbekistan. Participants agreed that Kazakhstan is the most favourable country in their region for meetings and other events, and that future events could be organized there for Central Asian NGOs.

Empowering Individual Activists and Building Solidarity Networks

The **Persian** Leadership Training Institute for Iranian Women was convened in October 2005, in Bangkok, Thailand to coincide with the 10th AWID International Forum. Individual participants developed new skills in leadership, communication, and advocacy during the Institute and were energized by exposure to new ideas and interaction with women's activists from around the globe, especially those from the Middle East and North Africa. The majority of the participants had not attended an international activist meeting before and felt personally enriched and inspired by the experience. In addition, participants were strengthened by the experience of solidarity with the group. By working together intensively for three days at the TOT Institute and participating as a group at AWID, participants developed a strong sense of group identity and an understanding of the common problems they faced in Iran.

Capacity Building for Women's Organizations

Due to the success of the **Middle East-Gulf** Institute in Beirut, Lebanon in November 2005, the Iraq Foundation asked WLP to host additional trainings for women in Iraq. To meet this need, CRTD.A agreed to host a two-part Institute in 2006 for participants from Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Full Institute reports are attached in **Appendix D**.



C. eCourses

eCourses (online distance learning courses) in participatory leadership reach out to those women whose ability to attend face-to-face workshops is constrained by security considerations or socio-cultural factors. During 2005, building on the experience gained from the prototype in 2004, WLP implemented a Persian eCourse for Iranian Women. Ten-week intensive eCourses on participatory leadership take an interactive, problem-solving approach to learning, with an emphasis on peer-to-peer communication. eCourses enable an inclusive approach to leadership development training. Diverse participants with a common language, Internet access, and the basic technical skills meet regularly for scheduled discussions in online forums, and coordinate small group activities through online discussion and email.

Participants in the Persian eCourse expressed a collective commitment to the restoration of the rights and freedoms of Iranian women. The eCourse environment was a new and exciting way for participants to learn from and work with other activists and professionals in Iran. At the conclusion of the course, participants expressed their interest in participating in additional eCourses for trainers on leadership in order to build on the concepts and strategies they learned over the eight-week period. Participants were able to build new relationships and empower one another through the sharing of experiences. They planned to stay in close communication with one another in an effort to develop a larger network of activists working to improve the lives of women in Iran. A full report of the course is attached in **Appendix E**.

A test Arabic eCourse for was conducted in the fall of 2005 for a group of 14 experienced leadership trainers from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine. They participated in the five-week prototype course to test and adapt the Arabic curriculum in preparation for a full eCourse in 2006. WLP trained partners from Morocco and Lebanon to act as facilitators for the upcoming course, focusing on use of the course technology and the interactive, problem-solving methodology that guides the course. At the end of the prototype Arabic eCourse the group strategized on ways to ensure maximum impact for the full eCourse in 2006. They decided to build on the strengths of the curriculum and innovative approach by recruiting a diverse group of committed participants and providing strong technical support to ensure participant comfort during their first online learning experience.

V. Capacity Building Program

A. ICT Capacity building and skills training

WLP's ICT Capacity Building program aims to harness ICT for the empowerment of women and for collective mobilization and advocacy purposes. The program endeavors to give women access to ICT, to increase women's ICT skills and confidence, and to extend their participation as producers of online content and ICT technicians. To achieve these goals, WLP has six IT Centers in Afghanistan, Cameroon, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Zimbabwe; an ongoing ICT capacity building program for partner organizations; and an ICT training handbook for women's rights activists under development. In order to improve and expand programs that strengthen partners' ICT capacity, WLP is conducting a technology needs-assessment for each of our national partners.



During 2005, WLP provided resources to partner organizations to conduct ICT skills training workshops based on the ICT capacity building module, "Advocacy for Women's Empowerment, Gender Justice and Social Change" developed by WLP. At the IT Center in Herat, Afghanistan, WLP partner Afghan Institute for Learning (AIL) offered comprehensive training facilitated by three trainers, one of whom was a participant in the WLP-AIL 2004 Kabul IT Training of Trainers Institute, and now uses her skills to impart knowledge to other trainees. She said, "We all know that computers are complex and that information technology is an expansive subject. From the Training of Trainers workshop, I learned how to teach the fundamentals of computer use in just five days, as well as innovative techniques for using information." The Herat Training Center provides a place where students can use computers and IT equipment as well as get affordable training in the use of IT tools. AIL will evaluate the impact of the training on participants when they return for further IT training or when they attend other AIL classes or workshops.

WLP's partner in **Cameroon**, Community Education and Development Services (CEDS) conducted IT training tailored to accommodate participants work schedules. One of the participants, Bridgette Fomunyam, a senior journalist with the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) said, "The contribution of Community Education and Development Services to the education of women is critical because most women in the Northwest province have not had access to computers. I am able to enjoy my computer classes because the trainers are understanding and conduct classes around my work schedule. I am sure by the end of the month I will be able to type my stories without difficulty."

WLP's partner in **Jordan**, Sisterhood is Global/Jordan (SIGI/J) conducted an IT workshop entitled "Using Internet in Mobilizing, Advocacy, and Grassroots Campaigns

for Human and Women's Rights." Fourteen participants representing different associations working in the field of human rights for women and children attended. The training improved participants' skills in utilizing IT to fulfill the objectives of civil society organizations.

WLP's partner in **Palestine**, Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) conducted three IT training workshops in 2005. Participants applied the training to their studies and added the training experience to their resumes. One participant said, "This course helped me to get information about the Internet, to connect to discussions on websites and to set up an email address which helps me communicate with other activists." For several participants, this was the first time they had access to a computer and at the end of the course a group of them expressed their wish to utilize their new skills for networking and lobbying for women's rights, as well as for election campaigns and awareness raising.

B. Multimedia Resource and Communication Tools

WLP's Arabic, English, and French websites are cyber resource and exchange centers that provide culture-, language-, and community-relevant content to facilitate South-South and South-North networking and information exchange. Designed to be user-friendly, the websites have a particular emphasis on women's leadership, political participation, human rights, peace, and development. During 2005, the websites received over 4 million hits with an average of approximately 13,000 hits per day. Web statistics indicate that there were numerous visitors to the websites from Muslim-majority societies, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Syria.

WLP made significant advances in planning and setting in motion the overhaul of its multilingual website, as well as preparing for new language versions in Persian and Russian to come on board later in 2006. WLP has adopted a new content management system (CMS), and a new hosting solution that better meets the traffic demands we expect to be faced with in the future.

Following the partners expressed need at WLP partner's meeting in Bangkok, WLP initiated the process of creating a multi-language portal and e-community to provide information and tools that women can access to design better advocacy platforms on issues of relevance to women in Muslim-majority societies. In 2006 WLP will launch a new portal for the *Leading to Choices* curriculum. The goal of the new portal is to increase opportunities for disseminating the leadership curriculum, provide a space to update training materials with culturally appropriate scenarios, and to empower partners to foster cross-pollination of ideas and content between women democracy activists particularly in Muslim-majority countries.

WLP also aims to increase visibility of partner organizations at the international level through increased web presence. WLP is discussing with each partner the possibility of acquiring a dot.org domain name. This first step will be followed over time by creating a website for each partner or a website overhaul for those with existing sites. During 2005, WLP developed a questionnaire on ICT needs assessment that will be administered to

gain a holistic understanding of the ICT needs, capabilities, and aspirations of partners. WLP continued to develop a strategy for its ICT programs over the next five years. The final version of the strategy document was reviewed by the staff and incorporated into the Sustainability and Operational Plans.

C. 2005 Transnational Partners Convening, Bangkok, Thailand



WLP convened the 2005 Transnational Partners meeting in Bangkok, Thailand on October 25-26, 2005. The meeting was planned to coincide with the Association for Women's Rights in Development's (AWID's) 10th International Forum. WLP partners from around the world attended the convening. Partners evaluated the leadership concept and methodology, shared new strategies for interactive facilitation and

exchanged outcomes of leadership initiatives emerging in each country. Partners also examined the challenges to promoting women's leadership in Muslim-majority societies, and brainstormed ideas and new strategies for increasing women's role in society. The meeting explored effective means to meet increasing demand for programs at the grassroots in partner countries.

Partners discussed means of achieving the goal of strengthening the feminist movement in order to transform power relations and promote justice, equality, peace, and democratic development. They recognized the need to strengthen their relationships with a view of building a women's movement that espouses the concepts of democratic and participatory decision-making and leadership. Partners identified training, exchanging experiences, solidarity building, campaigns, and discussion and analysis as important pillars of the Partnership which feed into program activities such as training and creation of curriculum.

WLP assists with internal capacity building of partner organizations to enable them to cope with increasing demand for WLP programs at the grassroots. Partners recognized the need to make capacity building an integral part of the partnership in order to build a strong women's movement in Muslim majority societies. During a session on knowledge creation, partners discussed the potential created by WLP's participation in various forums as means of building a political force for positive change. Partners agreed to entrench this concept of a learning organization in the Partnership's strategy in order to create a space for reflection on global issues. The full Institute Report is attached in **Appendix E**.

VI. ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

One of WLP's objectives is to amplify the voices of women activists from the Global South, particularly Muslim-majority societies, at the local, national, regional, and international levels. Since it was founded in 2000, WLP has worked to help women from the Global South emerge from the fringes of their societies and become fully engaged leaders and advocates. WLP considers advocacy and networking an essential activity for increasing women's role in family, community, and national decision-making, in the process creating societies that are more democratic, tolerant, and ethical. Issues of violence, growing extremism, human rights injustices, harsh social restrictions, low literacy, and poverty vary from region to region, but one truth is common to all. The able, committed participation of women — half of any country's population — is essential for crafting just solutions. WLP focuses global attention on specific rights issues through its advocacy campaigns, international symposia, and media outreach activities. WLP builds coalitions and strengthens regional and international networks that promote democratic governance, peace building, and women's human rights in order to strengthen the women's movement and to amplify the voices of marginalized women, especially those from Muslim-majority societies.

A. New Partners

WLP entered into a partnership agreement with four new women's organizations:

Brazilian partner **Cidadania, Estudo, Pesquisa, Informação e Ação (Cepia)** is a non-governmental, nonprofit organization, dedicated to developing projects that promote human and citizenship rights, especially among groups historically excluded from exercising their full citizenship in Brazil. To achieve this goal, Cepia has conducted studies and educational and social intervention projects since 1990, sharing its findings with policymakers, activists, and the public.

Egyptian partner **Forum for Women in Development (FWID)** is a network of Egyptian NGOs dealing with women's issues. FWID is made up of groups of activists from different social and professional backgrounds. They advocate for reform of policies and legislation that discriminate against woman. A partner from FWID participated in the Middle-East-Gulf Regional Learning Institute for Women's Leadership and Training of Trainers from November 19-22, 2005, in Beirut, Lebanon.

Mauritanian partner **L'Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille (AFCF)** is a membership organization with over 5,000 members. The primary mission of AFCF is to promote human rights and to defend the rights of women and children; bring about support for women in precarious situations; create a network of associations; and contribute to the emergence of an active solidarity amongst women of different social classes and fight for equality. In May 2005, WLP and AFCF held a National Learning Institute for Women's Leadership and Training of Trainers in Nouakchott, Mauritania for 15 women leaders each from different wilayas (regions) of Mauritania.

Nicaraguan partners **El Centro para la Participación Democrática y el Desarrollo** and **El Fondo para el Desarrollo de la Mujer** are sister organizations working to lay the foundation for women's economic security and political empowerment through credit, organization, education, and technical assistance.

B. Communications

WLP published a **Five-Year Report entitled “When Women Lead, Change Follows,”** and four issues of WLP’s electronic newsletter, **eNews**, to inform and update the Partnership and networks about activities, programs, and events of WLP partner organizations. Commenting on the Five-Year Report, Aminata Toure of the Gender, Culture, and Human Rights Branch, UNFPA said, “We are impressed by the very good job your organization has accomplished in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.” Hope Chigudu a gender specialist based in Harare, Zimbabwe said of eNews, “Keeping abreast of the work that you are doing in the area of women and leadership has been inspiring. I have been sharing your newsletter with other interested parties and they all appreciate your work.”

C. Outreach

Networks

WLP worked closely with several networks that provide a powerful resource for women at the grassroots by drawing together the experiences and expertise of individuals and organizations involved in various aspects and stages of women’s empowerment. 1) Global Women’s Action Network for Children is motivated by a vision of a just and equitable world where the needs and rights of women and children are met and assured; 2) Women Leaders Intercultural Forum brings together women leaders of the world to advance intercultural understanding; 3) Gender at Work is a knowledge and capacity building network focused on gender and institutional change; and 4) The International Women’s Democracy Network, hosted by WLP, shares best practice in promoting women’s political participation. The multicultural context of dialogue in these forums enables women activists to learn from other countries’ experiences and adapt them to the socio-political context of their own societies. The forums create a space for reflection on global issues and for developing theory that empowers women in their advocacy for just and democratic societies.

The Association for Women’s Rights in Development’s (AWID’s) 10th International Forum took place in October 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand. As a key member of the International Planning Committee (IPC) the President of WLP helped to develop the Forum’s plenary speeches, interactive sessions, workshops, debates, and creative sessions to create new knowledge on gender equality and women’s human rights. She proposed ways in which delegates would be able to form global and regional networks and build alliances through participatory events, such as informal caucuses, gala events, cultural activities, and social and political gatherings. She helped identify issues of special concern to women in Muslim-majority societies and to activists and scholars from the

MENA region whose past participation in the forums had been very limited. WLP's partners and staff were presented on several panels during the Forum.

WLP's President participated in a roundtable discussion about the recent report by the World Economic Forum entitled '*Women's Empowerment: Countries Closing the Gender Gap*', which was hosted by the Council of Women World Leaders in conjunction with the Aspen Institute, and presented opening remarks on promoting women's rights at a roundtable discussion entitled '*A Dialogue on Promoting Freedom in the Greater Middle East*' organized by Freedom House.

Meetings on Iran

WLP's President convened and participated in a number of events related to Iran. The events that she hosted included Iranian cultural events and panel discussions such as the Hoover Institution's Iran Democracy Project's Symposium entitled, '*Will Iran Be the Next Iraq?*' the National Endowment for Democracy's and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies' discussion on '*Religion and Democracy: Rethinking the Relationship*,' and a discussion entitled '*Private in Public/ Public in Private: A Conversation with Mahnaz Afkhami*' at the *Private Lives and Public Spaces in Modern Iran* conference at Oxford University, England.

Outreach to Policy Makers

WLP obtained United Nations ECOSOC Consultative Status during 2005 and was represented by its President in the Club de Madrid's International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism, and Security in Spain, where she participated on the panel, '*Women, Terror, Religion, Democracy: An Interactive Dialogue*.' Over 800 heads of state and government, key policymakers, leading scholars, and heads of international and nongovernmental organizations attended the Summit. Other policy related meetings in which she presented papers were the Council on Foreign Relations' seventh session in a series entitled '*Islam around the World*,' and a special meeting of Women Ministers of Culture in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Outreach to Media

During 2005, WLP's President, board members, partners, and staff gave interviews or wrote articles focusing on women's rights and empowerment for a range of print and broadcast media outlets including: The RUV- Icelandic National Broadcasting Service; Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty; "Straight Talk Africa," "Africa Journal," and "Special Report



Africa” of Voice of America; and *Persian Heritage Magazine*. A number of reporters from the *Daily Independent*, *The Punch*, *New Nigerian*, and *The Guardian* wrote stories about the Africa Regional Learning Institute for Women’s Leadership and Training of Trainers and the forum it provided for women activists from the region to share and learn tools to empower women throughout the continent.

Representatives of major media outlets attended the panel, ‘*A Shared Vision for Change: Women and Legislative Reform in Muslim-majority Societies*’ at Johns Hopkins University on November 21, 2005. Radio Farda-Radio Free Europe carried out interviews with each panelist for radio broadcast. Voice of America taped the event and released a televised report on their Persian service. The Maghreb Arab Press Agency interviewed Moroccan partner Rabéa Naciri. The *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* released a report of the event in their January 2006 edition. Representatives of VOA’s Policy Office and *Washington File* at the US State Department also attended the event.

In 2005, WLP implemented a new monitoring system to track partner press coverage through a series of online alerts. Partners acted as spokespeople on a range of issues affecting women’s rights and development. For example, WLP Lebanese partner Collective for Research and Training Development-Action (CRTD-A) launched a citizenship campaign for women to secure the right to pass on their nationality to their husbands and children at the Beirut International Marathon, covered by the *Daily Star*. Afghan partner Sakena Yacoobi, Executive Director of Afghan Institute for Learning (AIL), was featured discussing the organization’s work in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. In a two-part Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty feature on women and power in Central Asia Uzbekistan partner Marfua Tokhtahojeva discussed the new parliamentary quota requiring 30% of seats to go to women and continuing barriers to women.

Outreach through Public Events



WLP convened an international symposium entitled, ‘*Leading to Change: Eliminating Violence Against Women in Muslim Societies*,’ in New York on March 1, 2005. The symposium was planned to coincide with the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. WLP’s symposium provided a forum for prominent women leaders and activists from Muslim-majority societies to address major challenges to eliminating violence against women and girls and discuss grassroots, national, and regional efforts focusing on prevention and awareness raising, as well as ongoing efforts to reform legislation on violence and women’s human rights. More than 250 participants representing 40 countries attended the event. They included WLP board and international advisory board members, representatives of WLP partner

organizations, government ministers and representatives, United Nations country and convention delegates, leaders of international NGOs, representatives of leading international media, and women activists representing organizations from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America. Jahangir Piara, Secretary General of Human Friend's Organization wrote this of WLP's March Symposium in New York, "Thanks for the valuable information regarding the important issue of violence against women. We have learnt more about the issue through the experience of others and sharing views with each other."

WLP and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars organized an event entitled, '*Reflections on the International Women's Movement: 10 Years After Beijing*,' at the Wilson Center on May 10, 2005. Leading feminists Jacqueline Pitanguy (Brazil), Zenbwerke Tadesse, Joanna Kerr (Canada), and Mahnaz Afkhami (Iran) provided regional analysis on the future trends of the women's movement.

VII. Principal Risks

WLP identified growing fundamentalism as a major potential risk to implementation of its programs last year and in Uzbekistan this risk coupled with growing political repression and intolerance towards civil society activities led to changes in pre-planned activities and scaling down of implementation of leadership workshops. The Central Asia Institute took place amidst an atmosphere of heightened security and political tensions in the region. Originally scheduled for spring 2006 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the Institute was moved forward to summer 2005 and relocated to Shymkent, Kazakhstan in anticipation of increasing restrictions on civil society and rights activists. Aggressive tactics by the Karimov regime designed to annihilate Islamic militants combined with a weak economy have led the Uzbek population and the opposition to increasingly support the Islamic movement. The government has intimidated Uzbek society and the consequences for NGOs that allegedly 'step out of line' are severe. While the security environment was discouraging, WLP and TWRC agreed that leadership training for women activists is an even more urgent priority and the decision was made to proceed with implementation of the Institute. Owing to the flexible nature of WLP's program implementation process, which emphasizes working through local and regional networks of women, WLP's partner in Uzbekistan was able to locate a partner organization in Shymkent, Kazakhstan to host the Institute.

In Afghanistan millions voted in the first parliamentary and provincial elections in more than 30 years. Low voter turnout was attributed to the presence of former or current warlords and notorious human rights abusers on the list of candidates including known former communist and Taliban. Additionally, many of the people's expectations following the preceding presidential election remained largely unmet and this led to frustration and apathy toward political participation. WLP and its partner organization AIL contributed to women's participation in political processes by strengthening the leadership capacity of women in decision-making and participating in a drive to encourage them to vote.

In the Middle East, WLP partners operated in an unstable political and security environment. The war in Iraq and its aftermath have substantially increased tensions in the region. In Lebanon, many blamed Syria for February's assassination of their former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, triggering substantial anti-Syrian protests in Beirut and an outcry abroad which prompted the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. The 2005 Amman terrorist bombings killed 60 people and injured 115 others. A number of activities and events were postponed or cancelled as a result. WLP partner SIGI/Jordan was actively involved in the campaign to raise public consciousness against violence and terrorism. WLP monitors political and security developments in the region and maintains flexibility to effectively manage emergencies that may impact program implementation. Our partnership is convinced that our collective struggle provides a real and effective antidote to violence.