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NGO Update

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NGO UPDATE

To foster communication between human rights organizations around the world, each issue of the Human Rights Brief features "NGO Update." This space was created to aid non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by informing others about their programs, successes, and challenges. The views of the organizations below do not necessarily reflect those of the Brief. For information on how to submit updates for your organization, please see the instructions provided at the end of the column.

GRAMIN VIKAS VIGYAN SAMITI (GRAVIS) AND HEALTH ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM (HEDCON)

www.mineworker.org

Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS) and Health Environmental and Development Consortium (HEDCON) promote basic human rights for mineworkers in the state of Rajasthan, India, through their advocacy, health, and legal programs. GRAVIS is an implementing organization based in the city of Jodhpur, India. GRAVIS carries out projects that empower marginalized desert communities in Rajasthan to take ownership and control of their own natural resources, institutions, and social relations. Because mineworkers and their families comprise a great number of the poorest communities in Rajasthan, GRAVIS has developed a number of programs focused on mineworkers. Specifically, GRAVIS has educated over 10,000 mineworkers on their legal rights and has organized two labor unions with over 2,500 members. GRAVIS actively works with the mineworkers to develop access to alternative sources of income, education, and health services.

GRAVIS works closely with HEDCON, which provides advocacy and support for the mineworkers' rights work. Based in Jaipur, India, HEDCON conducts research, organizes advocacy programs, and produces publications. HEDCON's approach to promoting mineworkers' rights includes liaising with gov-

ernment officials, journalists, and other influential parties; conducting legal advocacy to enforce existing national and state legislation protecting mineworkers' rights; and closely documenting the health and general status of mineworkers. HEDCON publishes *Khan Mazdoor*, a quarterly newspaper (in Hindi) for mineworkers, media, local development agencies, and the government. It also produces *Mineworker*, an online bulletin (in English) used to sensitize development agencies and people around the world about mineworker issues in Rajasthan.

THE INSTITUTE FOR OVERCOMING URBAN POVERTY (ISMU)

For information in English, please contact:
Yael Falicov, IDEX Latin American
Program Director – yael@idex.org

For information in Spanish, please contact:
Elvira Sanchez Toscano, ISMU General
Coordinator – ismugua@explonet.com

The Institute for Overcoming Urban Poverty was founded in 1992 by neighborhood groups in the *asentamientos* (settlements) in and around Guatemala City who wanted to work together to improve their living conditions. These settlements are neighborhoods built on hillsides, where many people construct their homes of tin, cardboard, and scrap wood.

Through a combination of community organizing and legal advocacy, ISMU has been highly successful at winning land rights and basic services for its member communities, including water, electricity, roads, schools, and clinics. Through extensive negotiations with the Housing Ministry, ISMU has helped 55,000 families gain access to land title and the rights and services that come with it. This year, ISMU participated in a coalition of civil society organizations that helped push groundbreaking legislation through the Guatemalan congress, creating Guatemala's first national housing law. In addition, during the last presidential election, ISMU worked with women's organizations to substantially increase the

number of women voters. This increase contributed to the defeat of former dictator General Efraín Ríos Montt, who has been accused of genocide in Guatemala.

THE ELLA BAKER CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

www.ellabakercenter.org

The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights (EBC), based in San Francisco, California, is a national organization working to challenge abuses in the U.S. criminal justice system. Named after Ella Baker, an unsung heroine of the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, EBC continues her work today by empowering people to speak out in opposition to human rights violations in the United States. EBC focuses on documenting, exposing and challenging human rights abuses in the U.S. criminal justice system and developing community-based solutions. EBC uses a wide variety of tactics to accomplish its mission, including grassroots organizing, direct-action mobilizing, media advocacy, public education, policy reform, and legal services. EBC actively recruits at-risk youth, people of color, as well as parents and family members of prisoners to participate in its programs. Its innovative programs include "Books Not Bars" and "Let's Get Free." The "Books Not Bars" program aims to replace California's current youth prison system with rehabilitation centers and local programs that provide education and work opportunities for at-risk youth. "Let's Get Free" is a youth and student-run program that uses a unique combination of community organizing, hip-hop culture, and direct action to mobilize young people to influence city and county officials to invest in opportunity for young people instead of punishment. On October 19, 2004, EBC released a new film about California's state prison system for youth entitled, "System Failure - Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the California Youth Authority."

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

www.palsolidarity.org

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) was founded in 2001 by Huwaida Arraf, now a first year law student at the Washington College of Law, her husband, Adam Shapiro, and Israeli and Palestinian activists. The organization is committed to monitoring and reporting human rights abuses and violations of international law in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. ISM focuses on non-violent resistance and peaceful protests against Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories

and against violations of Palestinians' human rights. To carry out its activities, ISM recruits volunteers from around the world. Since its founding, ISM has trained over 2,000 volunteers. ISM volunteers travel to Palestine, where Palestinian and international activists train them in human rights monitoring, nonviolent resistance, and methods to de-escalate violent situations. In October and November 2004, ISM volunteers, along with Palestinian agricultural organizations and farmers, are conducting the 2004 Olive Harvest Campaign. With walls, fences, military roadblocks, and curfews, Palestinian farmers face many obstacles in getting to their land. ISM volunteers accompany farm-

ers to their olive groves, both to help farmers demand access to their land and to protect them while they harvest their olives.

The Human Rights Brief is accepting submissions for the next edition of "NGO Update." If your organization has an event or situation it would like to publicize, please send a short description to hrbrief@wcl.american.edu, and include "NGO Update" in the subject heading of the message. Please limit your submission to two paragraphs. The Human Rights Brief reserves the right to edit for content and space limitations. **HRB**

Lauren Bartlett, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of Law, covers NGOs for the Human Rights Brief.

Legislative Watch *continued from page 39*

posed amendment projects that more than 320,000 deaths will occur between April 1, 2004 and December 31, 2004.

S. 2781 states the United States will continue to provide safe and immediate access to all humanitarian assistance throughout the Darfur region and will increase efforts to provide assistance in obstructed and denied access areas. This bill calls on the United States Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes and the United States Government, with the international community, to immediately investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The bill requires the President to continue to make efforts toward sustainable peace in the Sudan, while providing the means necessary to save the lives of hundreds of thousands in the Darfur region. The bill calls on the President to condemn the actions of the Government of Sudan for engaging in ethnic cleansing and the killing of innocent civilians, to provide increased humanitarian assistance, and to confirm the right of the displaced Sudanese to return to their land safely. Under the bill, the President would also maintain diplomatic relations with Sudan and impose sanctions on the assets and activities of the Sudanese government officials involved in carrying out ethnic cleansing in the Darfur region.

The bill authorizes the President to appropriate \$200,000,000 for fiscal year 2005, in addition to any other funds available, to counter the humanitarian and human rights crisis in the Darfur region and

its impact on eastern Chad, where more than 200,000 refugees have fled. If the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Government of Sudan reach agreement on the North-South Peace agreement, the bill authorizes the President to appropriate an additional \$100,000,000 for fiscal year 2005 beyond any other funds available for such purposes.

Under the proposed amendment, the President can provide the additional \$100,000,000 assistance to the Government of Sudan only upon certification that it has made efforts to address current human rights violations. To receive the certification, the Government of Sudan must have taken demonstrable steps to stop the Sudanese armed forces from preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance and human rights monitoring; eradicate Government-created or supported militias; and cooperate with the African Union, the United Nations, and other observer and monitoring missions. If the President issues the certification and later determines the Government of Sudan has ceased in taking these efforts, this bill requires the President to immediately suspend any assistance to the Government of Sudan until these efforts are resumed. The bill concludes by requiring, within 60 days of the enactment of the Act, that the President submit a report on the planned United States response for a comprehensive peace agreement for Sudan.

S. RES. 392, A RESOLUTION CONVEYING THE SYMPATHY OF THE SENATE TO THE FAMILIES OF THE YOUNG WOMEN MURDERED IN THE STATE OF CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO, AND ENCOURAGING INCREASED UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN BRINGING AN END TO THESE CRIMES.

Sponsor: Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)

Status: Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, June 24, 2004.

Substance: S. Res. 392 acknowledges that the abduction, sexual assault, and horrific murders of more than 370 young women have plagued Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, since 1993, and expresses condolences to the families of the young women. The resolution urges the President and the Secretary of State to continue to express support for the families and human rights defenders involved in the cases. The resolution encourages that the Secretary of State undertake multilateral efforts to facilitate United States involvement in the creation of a DNA database to allow families to identify the remains of the victims. The resolution recommends that Mexico's Ambassador to the United States visit Ciudad Juarez and the city of Chihuahua to meet with those combating the atrocities to prevent future crimes. The resolution further condemns the use of torture to investigate the crimes and endorses appropriate punishment of the guilty. **HRB**

Heather Morris, a J.D. candidate, covers the Legislative Watch for the Human Rights Brief.