

# Inter Pares

## Highlights 2007

*In 2007, Inter Pares provided more than \$5 million in financial support as well as political and organizational assistance to help sustain the work of our counterparts in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Canada. The following are highlights of some of these activities. More detailed information is available on the Inter Pares Web site at [www.interpares.ca](http://www.interpares.ca).*



Monks in recent uprising in Burma.

## Asia

- During the year, Inter Pares provided almost \$700,000 to the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) for the purchase of food commodities, cooking fuel, mosquito nets and other basic supplies for more than 165,000 refugees from Burma living in Thailand's refugee camps. The TBBC, a consortium of international humanitarian organizations, also provides cross-border assistance to some of the 600,000 internally displaced people living in remote jungle and mountain areas inside Burma.
- The recent popular uprising in Burma, led by monks and nuns, demonstrated the vital role of the media in getting news out of Burma and showing the world the extent of the military junta's brutality. For many years Inter Pares has supported the development of independent media as a counterweight to Burma's heavily censored official media. Members of the Burma News International coalition played a crucial role in gathering and disseminating information during the recent crack-down, despite the junta's efforts to seal off the country from the rest of the world.
- The India-based Deccan Development Society (DDS), in collaboration with a coalition of seventy citizens' groups called the South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE), organized events in four states to debate and critique the introduction of genetically modified organisms and to promote ecological agriculture. DDS's continuing research on the introduction of Bt cotton in India has played an important role in exposing the devastating social and economic costs to Indian farmers of this genetically engineered cotton variety. SAGE's organizing work has led to a charter of demands presented to the Government of India that it offer reparations to affected farmers and that it prevent the introduction of genetically engineered varieties by corporations without proper testing and community consultations.



Sophie Havyarimana of Burundi speaking at the Ottawa event on sexual violence in armed conflict.

## Canada

- In September, Inter Pares invited fifteen international women's rights activists from Asia, Africa and Latin America to participate in a series of events addressing sexual violence in armed conflict. This exchange provided an opportunity for these activists, all of whom are working with survivors of sexual violence, to share experiences and dilemmas from their work, and to learn from one another. They shared knowledge about truth, justice and reparations processes, national and international legal strategies, mental health and social support programs, and outlined future areas of research and collaboration. They met with Canadian rights activists, lawyers, psychologists, academics, government officials, and workers from sexual assault centres. In order to share this work and learning with Canadians, Inter Pares organized public discussions in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver.
- For many years Inter Pares has supported the Canadian Health Coalition in its work defending and promoting public health care in Canada. In 2007, Inter Pares supported the Canadian Health Coalition's Medicare Works, a national education and action campaign. The campaign included thirty-two community meetings across Canada which were followed by a major conference in Regina entitled "S.O.S. Medicare 2: Looking Forward, Building on the Vision of Tommy Douglas." The conference brought together unions, women's organizations, health care professionals and international experts to discuss the future of public health care in Canada.

## Africa



ERIC CHAURETTE

Colleen Ross of the National Farmers Union and Jeanne Zoundjihépon of COPAGEN at the World Forum on Food Sovereignty in Mali, March 2007.

- ACORD, based in Kenya, and Third World Network-Africa, based in Ghana, continued their mobilization, education and policy advocacy work with civil society actors and government officials about the impacts of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Union. Under the slogan “Stop, Think, and Resist,” this campaign has led to increased public awareness of the

impacts of EPAs on farmers, producers and consumers. EPAs pose serious dangers to local economies, undermining the livelihoods of farmers who cannot compete with heavily subsidized imports from Europe.

- Inter Pares staff participated in the World Forum on Food Sovereignty in Mali in March 2007. Representatives from farmers’ groups from around the world attended the summit to discuss the future of sustainable agriculture and the urgent need for national food sovereignty policies. Following the Mali meeting, Inter Pares coordinated a series of events in Canada in partnership with the Coalition for the Protection of African Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN). These events included meetings with West African and Canadian government officials, philanthropist organizations, and Canadian farmers’ groups, as well as public

discussions. Through this work, decision-makers have been educated about the need for policies that promote and strengthen the role of small-scale African farmers.

- In preparation for the 2009 elections in Sudan, the Gender Centre for Research and Training is working to encourage and promote women’s political participation. A recent key achievement is the adoption of a policy by the Sudanese Electoral Commission, making it mandatory for all political parties to nominate 25 percent female candidates. The Gender Centre, along with other leaders and organizations, is working with all political parties to promote women’s rights in party platforms and programs. The months ahead will be crucial for Sudanese civil society in their public awareness and civic education activities in the lead-up to the elections.

## Latin America



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Member of the indigenous Embera Katio nation on a hillside of Bogotá, Colombia.

- In Guatemala, Inter Pares continued to support organizations working with women affected by sexual violence during the armed conflict. The Advocates for Change consortium has been a key voice for women’s rights in the ongoing implementation of the 1996 Peace Accords. In 2007, the consortium reviewed the draft law on reparations for victims of the conflict. The resulting legislation submitted to Guatemala’s National Congress included a more comprehensive concept of reparations and a broader

definition of crimes of sexual violence. This provided public acknowledgment of the many ways in which women were targeted and brutalized during the armed conflict.

- In 2007, Inter Pares contributed over \$500,000 to support the work of local associations of people displaced by the armed conflict in Colombia. During the year, these associations successfully negotiated with municipal authorities for the provision of housing for over 800 displaced families. Through the human rights education activities provided by this program, 90 percent of the displaced population is now registered with the National Health System. Poor and internally displaced women in the city of Bucaramanga formed the Metropolitan Women’s Network, and successfully advocated with local authorities for funding of social programs to address violence against women.

- In July, Inter Pares counterparts from Peru appeared before the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC) to expose the Peruvian government’s failure to address sexual violence against women committed during two decades of armed conflict. Four organizations presented the current situation of women affected by sexual violence, using case studies and information documented in Peru’s Truth Commission report, including the obstacles in obtaining justice for affected women and overcoming the impunity of perpetrators. The IAHRC hearing was asked to highlight the government’s non-compliance with its obligations outlined in the Truth Commission report, and to pressure the government to take action on these issues.

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