

Inter Pares

Highlights 2009

In 2009, Inter Pares contributed more than \$6 million in financial support, as well as political and organizational assistance to sustain the work of our counterparts in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Canada. The following are highlights from some of these activities. More detailed information is available on the Inter Pares Web site at www.interpares.ca.



Sudanese women demonstrate for their political rights.

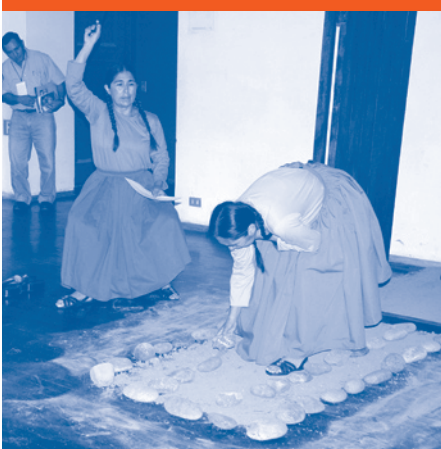
- 2009 marked a turbulent year for civil society in Sudan. The President of Sudan was charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court and in retaliation, many international NGOs were expelled from Sudan. Despite this politically sensitive climate, the **Gender Centre for Research and Training (GCRT)**, based in Khartoum, continued its struggle to promote women's rights and social

Africa

change in Sudan. The GCRT implemented its plan of action challenging religious fundamentalism and the military regime as well as promoting peace and gender equality. In 2009, they brought together feminists, academics, legal experts, scholars and human rights activists as a culmination of many years of research, reflection and activism to discuss and debate gender, Islam and women's rights. Participants discussed the way fundamentalist religious discourse and practice negatively impact the lives of Sudanese women and the need for alternative Muslim voices. This initiative demonstrates the GCRT's courage to speak publicly about controversial issues and to open a space for change despite an increasingly hostile, and potentially dangerous, political environment.

- The **Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD)**, a

pan-African organization working for justice and rights in Africa, is increasingly being recognized for its pioneering work in conflict prevention and women's rights. In 2009, its program, *The Hidden War Crimes: Challenging the Impunity on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Countries of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region*, was awarded 2 million euros from a special fund of the Dutch government. The initiative is geared towards combating violence against women with a focus on situations of conflict. The program includes ACORD's work in Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania and will contribute towards implementing mechanisms to address impunity and access justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and promote women's rights and agency.



A play about sexual violence against women in Peru by cultural group Yuyachkani.

- After more than five years of documentation by Inter Pares' counterparts Demus and IDL in Peru, trials began in April 2009 of military personnel accused of systematically using sexual violence as a weapon of war in the region of Huancavelica. The Manta case, as it is called, is a move towards justice for survivors. It is the first time that international judicial norms, defining sexual violence in armed conflict as a crime against humanity, are being used in Peru. This

Latin America

trial now opens possibilities for survivors from other regions of Peru, where sexual violence was also used to terrorize civilians, to seek and obtain justice.

- Civil society organizations and State representatives from Colombia, Guatemala and Peru gathered in July 2009 to discuss ways to prevent, eradicate and make reparations for the violence committed against women in armed conflict. This public policy dialogue was the culmination of years of work by Inter Pares' counterparts to break survivors' isolation and to speak publicly about the issue. In a region where discussion of sexual violence was once completely absent from truth and reparations processes and from the agenda of many human right organizations, not to mention governments, a broad range of society gathered to collectively discuss public policies that will create lasting institutional change for women in the region. Such a dialogue would not have been possible five years ago.

- **Tutela Legal**, the human rights office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, works on the aftermath of the 12-year-long civil war in El Salvador. Tutela Legal promotes efforts to recuperate historical memory of the armed conflict, and engages in advocacy and public awareness in order to achieve justice and reparations for victims of crimes against humanity. Another aspect of their work is to work with communities affected by violent massacres during the civil war, including organizing forensic exhumations of mass graves. In collaboration with other human rights organizations and forensic anthropologists, a mass grave in the community of San Gregorio was exhumed this summer – a crucial step in taking the case of this massacre to the courts in search of justice. The remains of the victims were formally returned to their families in November 2009, representing an important act of justice and healing for those affected by the war.

Asia



KAREN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

Separating rice from the chaff in Thaton District, Thailand.

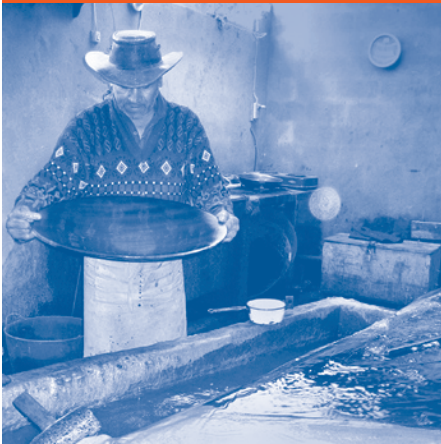
- In the province of Mindanao in the Philippines, TRICOM assisted four indigenous groups to obtain legal title to their ancestral lands. After nearly a decade of struggle with a reluctant government, four groups, made up of over 3,250 families, secured collective land ownership in 2009. The sustainable agricultural and forest management systems developed by these indigenous groups can now be implemented without risk of the land being taken away – an important step toward improved food security and economic development.

- In Asia, traditional rice production practices and knowledge are in danger of being lost. The **Pesticide Action Network, Asia-Pacific** (PAN-AP) has created, with farmers' organizations and NGOs in eighteen countries, a pan-Asia movement to protect the livelihoods of small-scale rice farmers and promote the conservation of traditional rice varieties. Through educational and cultural events, as well as research and advocacy, PAN-AP and its members have highlighted the need to defend traditional rice-growing practices and varieties at national and regional levels. PAN-AP coordinated campaigns against the introduction of genetically engineered (GE) rice varieties and obtained support from Korea, Nepal, and the Indian states of West Bengal and Kerala for a moratorium on the introduction of GE rice.

- The **Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT)** has delivered basic health services to internally displaced people in remote border regions of Burma, where government health services are

non-existent, and international agencies are unable to work. In 2009, the number of BPHWTs increased and in the first six months they treated a total caseload of 43,905. They also provided health education to over 18 thousand school children, and delivered basic supplies to nearly 600 traditional birth attendants and over 2,300 health kits for new mothers. They provided Vitamin A treatment to over 45 thousand children, and de-worming treatment to nearly 37 thousand children. During the military offensive in eastern Burma in June, which led to the displacement of 4,000 new Karen refugees into Thailand, the BPHWT organized a special team to provide emergency health care to these displaced communities. The BPHWT also continued to offer training with almost 5,000 people attending Community Health Education Sessions during the first six months of 2009.

Canada



JEAN SYLVE

Small-scale miner at work in Colombia.

- Canadian foreign direct investment in Colombia has risen consistently since the 1990s, particularly in the areas of mining, fossil fuel extraction, and telecommunications. The oil- and mineral-rich regions in which Canadian companies are active have been and continue to be plagued by violence, displacement, and paramilitary activities. In collaboration with the Colombian organization CENSAT-Agua Viva and MiningWatch Canada, Inter Pares has published the results of a study on the role of Canadian companies in Colombia in a report entitled *Land and Conflict*. Testimony gathered through this study suggests

that companies may unintentionally benefit from human rights violations and/or benefit those responsible for human rights violations. Increased investment in the extractive sector risks entrenching and even expanding the grave human rights violations caused by the war in Colombia. Land and Conflict makes the case for conducting human rights impact assessments for current and proposed mining projects in areas of conflict. The report is available on the Inter Pares Web site (www.interpares.ca/en/publications/pdf/Land_and_Conflict.pdf).

- *Rising from the Ashes* is the title of a video produced in 2009 by Inter Pares and **Project Counselling Service (PCS)** that follows our work in Peru through the inspiring story of five women affected by the armed conflict. Inter Pares supporters across Canada have screened the film in their homes and in their community. The film was also presented at Ottawa's One World Film Festival where it drew an audience of 150 people in October. Joined by long-time colleague Diana Avila, who is also featured in the

film, Inter Pares staff participated in a discussion with audience members on the issue of political violence against women in armed conflict and their search for justice and peace.

- At various points in 2009, counterparts from Bangladesh, Guinea-Bissau, Peru, Malaysia and Burma travelled to Canada to share their perspective and analysis with Canadian policy makers and the Canadian public. For example, this past September, members of Burma's democracy movement, including humanitarian and human rights workers such as Dr. Cynthia Maung from the **Mae Tao Clinic**, were part of a delegation that testified in front of parliamentary and senate committees about the importance of Canada's role in promoting democracy in Burma and in supporting the people who have fled the regime. During her time in B.C., the city of Vancouver proclaimed September 22, 2009 "Dr. Cynthia Maung Day" in honour of her dedicated health work.

Inter Pares' work is made possible by thousands of supporters across Canada, and by contributions from the Canadian government through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Inter Pares is deeply grateful for this trust and support.

Inter Pares, 221 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 6P1
Phone (1-613) 563-4801 or (1-866) 563-4801 (toll free) Fax (1-613) 594-4704 www.interpares.ca