

# meet the LEADERS



**Leadership  
Institute in  
Women's  
Economic Social  
& Cultural Rights**

**Leadership Institute  
2011**



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## Who We Are

PWESCR (Programme for Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) is an international human rights organisation based in the Global South. We promote women's economic, social and cultural rights by bringing a gender framework to policy, law and practice at local, national, regional and international levels. With a focus on women's poverty, our research provides economic analysis to women's issues. We build capacity of women leaders to link the most marginalised women's voices and realities from the ground to the highest level of policy-making, including the UN. Our collaborative networking facilitates new strategies for defending and the actualisation of women's human rights. We also provide technical assistance and human rights education. We link some of the most pressing grass root issues to the international from women's perspective. We particularly focus on International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and not just Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as has been the focus of women's human rights work in general.

## Our Goals

- ☉ To build leadership and capacity of groups, organisations, activists and other actors in the field of human rights and economic justice to promote women's ESCR;
- ☉ To establish links and foster collaborations in order to enhance learning, as well as develop shared strategies to advocate problem-solving alternatives at all levels within the context of gender.

## Our Principles

- ☉ All human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent. Civil and political rights are interdependent with economic, social and cultural rights and vice-a-versa;
- ☉ Women's economic and social empowerment are key to the full realisation of women's human rights;
- ☉ Gender analysis is crucial to advancing all ESCR;



- ④ Human rights mechanisms are an organising, mobilising and empowering tool in addition to the international legal framework;
- ④ An intersectional analysis ensures that women from marginalised communities are not left behind.

PWESCR's Leadership Institute in Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is an annual leadership development programme for women's rights leaders (men and women) working in organisations from the economic South. The Institute, based on the ICESCR, is held in two phases each year. A weeklong training is followed six months later with a weeklong follow-up session. It is uniquely designed for economic and social justice activists and human rights practitioners working on women's rights in key leadership positions in organisations/institutions to effectively use the human rights framework to drive change, addressing structural causes of poverty, discrimination and inequalities.

Capacity-building for PWESCR means to enable others to carry out their human rights agenda, including monitoring, competently, independently, and continuously. PWESCR believes that women provided with certain enabling conditions are able to not only articulate and access their rights but also are able to emerge as leaders facilitating positive social change. PWESCR's leadership development programme enables women's rights leaders to effectively use the international human rights framework and mechanisms to drive change, addressing structural causes of poverty, discrimination, and inequalities. The broad objective of the Institute is to building capacity of women's rights leaders, especially from the Global South, in relation to women and ESCR. The aim is also to develop a network of human rights trainers who will conduct similar trainings and provide technical assistance on ESCR at local and national levels in collaboration with PWESCR. The training will strengthen the ability of individuals and organisations to apply international human rights norms to the domestic context. This will help local women practitioners raise awareness and create change in domestic law and policy. It aims to highlight mutual relevance and build connections between the local and global human rights fields. PWESCR's training on women's ESCR is also based on the growing demand from activists and women leaders seeking opportunities for education and dialogue about women's human rights with both their peers and others.

## The main goals are:

- ④ To develop a core group of leaders in the economic South to advance women's human rights from the local to the global level
- ④ To help shape the emergence of a women's economic, social and cultural rights paradigm and movement by formation of a collective

## ABOUT THE COURSE

The Institute offers the necessary skills to become effective human rights leaders in mobilising, organising, educating, raising awareness and advocating for women's ESCR at all levels. The Leadership Institute particularly focuses on women's poverty by addressing discrimination, marginalisation, and exclusion faced by women. It helps participants become familiar with key principles of the international human rights framework, especially the ICESCR and be able to apply them to their work in a practical way. The Institute also enhances skills in effective human rights advocacy to hold governments accountable to their human rights obligations. An intersectional approach is used to ensure women at the crossroads of multiple forms of discrimination such as gender, caste, race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation are included.

Phase 1 of the Institute is held over a week. Each individual brings a case study or a programme idea, endorsed by their organisation, which informs an action project that is implemented by their organisation. Participants are paired with individual faculty members as mentors who address challenges and difficulties that might arise. Mentors also assist individuals in developing their action projects. Learning at the Institute is put into practice through small groups working on selected action projects.

The same group of participants returns after six months for Phase 2, a follow-up session. In the six months between Phase 1 and 2, the skills learnt in Phase 1 are applied to individual action projects. PWE-SCR develops e-tools and provides continuous technical assistance to ensure effective implementation of these action projects. In Phase 2, participants share their experiences of working on their projects in their



respective organisations. Through a process of peer learning and sharing, participants enhance their confidence and capacities, becoming effective human rights practitioners. Based on participants' interests and inputs, Phase 2 also covers additional training on topics. These follow-up sessions are thus crucial to ensure the conceptual learning from the Institute is actually put into practice. After two years, all committed participants will be invited to form a Collective on Women's ESCR to develop common strategies and an agenda to promote women's ESCR.

The Institute includes participatory workshops on various topics, exploring the complexities of different concepts using films, group work, training practicalities and the implementation of the framework using various exercises and games. It also offers an intellectually rigorous and well-designed course, employing diverse pedagogical methods including lectures, interactive and participatory discussion sessions, case study method, study groups, simulation exercises, group work, and audio-visual material including films. Grounding conceptual theory in practice, the Institute aims to identify how rights are and can be used to ensure justice and equality in the context of women's poverty.

**Leadership Institute 2012** will be held in two phases. All selected participants should attend both the phases.

**Phase 1 for 2012:** January 22nd to January 28th, 2012

**Phase 2 for 2012:** June 25th to June 30th, 2012

**Deadline for applications:** Friday, September 30th, 2011.

For Information and application form for 2012 Leadership Institute please visit our website at [pwescrleadership.org](http://pwescrleadership.org)




## Leadership Institute, Batch 2011

From 130 applicants, 24 leaders were selected for the first batch of 2011 Leadership Institute. The batch consisted of twenty four women and men from countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Colombia, India, Jamaica, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. At the leadership Institute, their skills in mobilizing, organizing, raising awareness and advocating for women's ESCR were honed further. They were equipped with tangible information and knowledge of the human rights framework.

The Action Projects were an opportunity for innovative ideas from different parts of the world, to be adapted within the ESCR framework, mentored by faculty members with years of experience, endorsed by the organizations to which the participants belong, and implemented by enthusiastic participants who are now ready to spread their wings and fly.

These Action Projects were also an opportunity for the learning at the Institute to be tried and tested in very different socio-economic and political conditions across four continents. The topics for the projects were diverse and included shadow reports to CESC in Cameroon; poor women's right to food in Bangladesh; ESC rights of lesbian and bi-sexual women in Sri Lanka; right to adequate housing in Argentina; ESCR of women in situations of conflict in Sri Lanka; women and mass media in China; rights of victims of forced displacement in Colombia; women's access to healthcare in Bangladesh; etc. These projects got implemented in varied regional and country contexts. The programme ideas, goals and target audience were distinct and differed from project to project. The only commonality was the learning at the Leadership Institute and the zeal to make a difference and change the world.




## Meet the Leaders

Let us get to know the leaders better. Let us watch them at work. Let us see them use the learning at the Institute to make a difference and let us hear from them how PWESCR's Leadership Institute has helped them evolve and grow.

## Meet Saeed Murad Rahi from Afghanistan

*"I am using ICESCR and CEDAW components discussed at Leadership Institute to accomplish this project. The learning material, videos, lectures and group discussions at the Institute helped me tremendously with my project."*



Our leader from Afghanistan holds a Bachelor's Degree in Sharia and Law from Pakistan and a Master's Degree in Conflict Transformation, and Peace Building and Restorative Justice from Eastern Mennonite University in the United States. He is the author of Mediation Skills in Conflict Transformation and co-authored Commentary of the Civil Law of Afghanistan. He has also edited and coordinated writing the Dari – Pashto Legal Glossary. Prior to accepting the position of Legal Advisor with USAID – Afghanistan, he worked as Democracy Outreach Advisor with the Office of the State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. He was part of the drafting committee on law on elimination of all forms of violence against women. He has contributed in drafting the Interim Criminal Procedure Code for Court and the Law on Obtaining Rights and National Policy on State and non-State Justice Mechanisms' Relations. He also served as Acting Chief of Party, Senior Program Coordinator and Legislative Specialist with the Afghanistan Rule of Law Project, a USAID-funded project in Afghanistan and was legal advisor to the Afghan Supreme Court and Ministry of Justice. He currently works for Development and Public Awareness organization (DPA).

## Rahi at Work

My action project for the Leadership Institute, Internally Displaced Women in Afghanistan aims to address the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced women by removing systemic obstacles.

As a result of the civil war and the armed conflict in Afghanistan, women from Helmand Province of Afghanistan have lost their husbands, children, property and houses. Many have been displaced. They

are struggling to build sustainable livelihoods and gain access to land, shelter and basic services. Most settlements lack water, sanitation and other basic infrastructure.

My project aims to address the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced women by removing systemic obstacles (social, political, financial, physical and human), which impede their ability to build sustainable livelihoods. I am approaching the legal community, civil society organizations, government officials, human rights activities, NGOs and the donor community to find ways to tackle this problem.

DPA, the organization Rahi works with, is an NGO consisting of a group of young Afghans with professional qualifications and background in democracy, governance, conflict resolution, law, public awareness and comparative religion. It focuses on four major areas: capacity building and consultancy; conflict resolution and peace building; social/business development and improving service delivery; and public awareness and comparative religion.



*"It was great pleasure to be in a women's workshop.  
It was a pleasure knowing all friends from different  
countries and the business of human rights."*



## Meet Laura Beatriz Royo from Argentina

*“The Leadership Institute helped put into practice the human rights approach and the gender perspective.”*



Our leader from Argentina is a lawyer specializing in human rights. She works for Centre for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) in Buenos Aires on litigation of human rights cases before domestic courts involving housing rights, social security, right to health, principle of non-discrimination, right to water and sanitation and the right of access to public information. She also develops investigative work on social policies in light of the international human rights standards.

### Laura at Work

The Right to Adequate Housing of the People of the Matanza Riachuelo River Basin, my action project for the Institute, focuses on the right to housing of vulnerable groups—especially women that live near the basin.

During research it was discovered that these communities have no information about the details of their relocation. We met with several national and local authorities to get information about the process of the relocation policy.

My project focuses on the right to housing of vulnerable groups—especially women that live near the basin. It includes advocacy before the various state agencies involved in the protection of these rights to coordinate and clarify their interventions and competencies, and thus achieving more accountability and effective response in the cleaning of the Matanza Riachuelo River Basin. Ultimately, the intent is to create a model of democracy and rights protection that promotes a virtuous interaction between the social and public actors.

The project will take advantage of the opportunity generated by a recent structural decision by the Argentine National Supreme Court (on July 8, 2008) mandating that the National Government, Province

of Buenos Aires and City of Buenos Aires develop and implement a comprehensive plan to achieve the environmental restoration of the Matanza Riachuelo Basin and improve the quality of life of its four million residents. CELS has been assigned a fundamental institutional role to ensure the full participation of the people affected by the plan.

We visited the affected neighbourhoods that will be relocated and discovered that these communities have no information about the details of their relocation. We met with several national and local authorities to get information about the process of the relocation policy. We worked to bring the human rights approach and the gender perspective in the state's decisions.

The Institute helped underscore the importance of integrating the gender approach both in the design and implementation of public policies as well as in our analysis.

Our organisation was already using the human rights approach. The Institute helped me layer it with the gender perspective. Every day, I wake up and remind myself to put on my gender lens!



*Matanza Riachuelo Basin: people living in the dump and on the river*

My faculty mentor's comments helped me refine my project from a gender perspective. The Institute has challenged me to think of what happens to women as beneficiaries of state policies. The monthly Skype calls have been especially helpful in sharing progress, as well as discussing problems. The action project has helped make the theory that we learned in Delhi, real.

Laura works with CELS. The organization has been working on the promotion and protection of human rights and strengthening the democratic system in Argentina. The organization's main objectives are: reporting human rights violations; influencing the policy-making process based on respect for fundamental rights; promoting legal and institutional reforms designed to improve the quality of democratic institutions; and promoting an increased ability to exercise these rights by the most vulnerable sectors in society, especially women and people living in poor conditions.

## Meet Afsana Chowdhury from Bangladesh

*“The Leadership Institute has helped me explore and analyse issues of gender based discrimination and its impact.”*



With a Master's Degree in Sociology from Rajshahi University, our leader from Bangladesh started her career with Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) as Senior Theatre Activist. From 2008 to 2009, she was coordinator of a project that enhanced access to justice and advocacy for vulnerable groups supported by the Royal Danish Embassy (DANIDA). She has conducted various training courses on human rights, women's rights, gender analysis, and self-defence for women and Theatre for Development (Action Theatre). She completed research on the socio-economic status of the cultural workers and on the various PIL fields since the independence of Bangladesh. She now works on reducing the maternal death rate in collaboration with the Directorate of Health Services of the Bangladesh Government, which aims to create a women-friendly environment in government hospitals. She is currently Executive Member of Sirajgonj Uttaran Mohila Sangstha (SUMS).

### Afsana at Work

My project Reduce Maternal Mortality and Morbidity by Identifying and Removing Barriers that Lie between Women and Facilities has the objective of maintaining the quality of care and creating a mechanism in hospitals for death audit of maternal mortality.

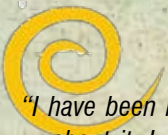
We conducted a seminar on women-friendly hospital initiatives with different sectors, e.g. local administration, public representatives and civil society.

The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in Bangladesh continues to be unacceptably high compared to many other developing countries, with a persistence of medical negligence. While access to family planning is increasing, access to the three other pillars of safe motherhood—antenatal care, clean and safe delivery, and essential obstetric care—remain largely unfulfilled.

We have met with hospital service providers (nurses, gynaecologists and doctors) on the issue of maternal death review in Bhairab Health Complex, Kisorganj. We conducted a seminar on women-friendly hospital initiatives with different sectors (local administration, public representatives and civil society) in Manikganj District Hospital and Bhairab Health Complex. My project helped me elaborate how to involve service providers in favour of women, as well as how to document and review the system of maternal patients. It encouraged me to take on initiatives for the implementation status on MDG 5 by the state and NGOs.

The sessions at the Institute advocated the fact that development is a woman's right and a core pillar of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Another aspect of great interest to me was the relationship and distinction between ICESCR and CEDAW—the former covering issues of equality and the latter non-discrimination.

Afsana works with SUMS, which was established by a group of women development and social workers. It has been engaged in institution building; social empowerment; women's development; environmental development through awareness raising, plantation and sanitation programmes; emergency disaster response and service delivery; health services to women, children and adolescents; education to underprivileged children and adults; agricultural development and food security; governance; and human rights.



*"I have been interested in ESCR and have been reading about it. I also see a linkage with women's health in which I work, especially when I saw cases in context of my work on reducing MMR, there is very low focus on ESCR."*

## Meet Hasne Ara from Bangladesh

*“The Leadership Institute made me a better planner and implementer of development projects.”*



Our leader from Bangladesh has 13 years of rich and diverse experience in mainstreaming gender equality at organizational, as well as programmatic, interventions. She developed the Gender Awareness and Analysis Course (GAAC) and Gender Sensitization Training (GST) through an action learning process, research design and implementation of training projects, and coordinating Gender Audit for organizations. She is actively involved with the gender sensitive education reforms movement, creating public opinion in favour of a gender responsive national budget, women’s political participation and mobilization of opinion for operationalisation of the National Women Advancement Policy 2011. She is presently a manager with the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee (BRAC) Gender Justice and Diversity Programme.

### Hasne at Work

For my action project, I chose to work on Right to Food Security of Women living with Ultra Poverty - Dimensions of the Safety Net Programme of Bangladesh Government. The project captures the impact of government and non-government run development programmes on women acutely affected by poverty.

To make the findings of my research representative in nature, I chose the population from Heads of Female Headed Households (FHH), widows / separated women, ethnic and religious minorities and women with disability.

In Bangladesh, the ultra poor – those trapped at the bottom 10 percent of per capita income - suffer from chronic food insecurity, severe malnourishment, high diseases and morbidity and have not been served by the normal growth processes of mainstream development approaches. Women face the double burden of such extreme poverty. People living with ultra poverty include women from various socially-excluded groups such as those who are widowed, separated/deserted, divorced or whose husbands are unable to work. Evidence shows



that enhancing women's control over resources directly contributes to improvement in household and child welfare.

My action project looks at two safety net schemes of the Bangladesh government - Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD). It aims to document access and entitlement to safety net programmes under the right to food security commitment of the Bangladesh government in context of ultra poor women in Netrokona Sadar and Durgapur Upzilla. It identifies key areas of vulnerability in terms of accessibility and looks at issues of livelihood of women and inbuilt mechanisms to protect the rights of ultra poor women through safety net schemes. It also seeks to find community-based solutions to protect the right of food security for women living with ultra poverty. The project design was developed and the information collected was shared with colleagues for feedback.

It was a privilege for me to be part of the Institute. It helped me develop a new conceptual framework on human rights issues with a focus on ESCR. The action project gave me an opportunity to reflect on the conceptual understanding. It added new knowledge and made it possible for me to plan my development interventions in a more effective manner.



*Rahela, 17 years old, Adolescent mother, living with extreme poverty*

The ESCR framework helped both in the design as well as implementation process. It helped me look at the dimensions of the right to adequate food security issue of ultra poor women.

After the Institute, I internalized ICESCR as a guideline for ensuring women's equal rights.

Hasne works for BRAC. The organization integrates development programmes with social enterprises, working with individuals, families, communities and institutions to overcome poverty. Its mission is to empower people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, disease and social injustice. It aims to achieve large scale, positive changes through economic and social programmes that enable women and men to realize their potential.



## Meet Selina Akhter from Bangladesh

*“The Institute is a global mobilization to address non-discrimination, poverty and dignity.”*



Our leader from Bangladesh is a Senior Staff Lawyer at Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a human rights organisation based in Dhaka, Bangladesh that provides legal aid and alternative dispute resolution support. At ASK, she offers counseling and psychotherapy to disenfranchised individuals seeking justice and redress of their human rights. She has worked closely with poor women, garment workers and working children to create access to justice system through the Mediation and Rapid Response Unit of ASK. In addition to this mediation and litigation work, she is also involved in couples therapy and trauma counseling with survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse, as well as child and adolescent survivors of physical, mental and sexual abuse. She completed a Bachelor of Law at the University of Dhaka, and enrolled as an advocate in 1993. She also holds a Master of Social Science in Political Science from the University of Dhaka. In addition, she has a diploma degree in Transactional Analysis under the supervision of P.K Saru of the Asha Counselling Centre in Coimbatore, India.

### Selina at Work

My action project Awareness Raising on Women’s Rights is based specifically on a landmark judgment passed by the Honourable High Court in response to a writ petition filed by female commissioners challenging a circular on the grounds that it violated their constitutional right to equality and non-discrimination. The writ petition (number 3304 of 2003) was filed in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh High Court Division (Special Original Jurisdiction).

The target group consists of male and female commissioners, counsellors and members of union parishad. I am highlighting ESCR in my project, and am concentrating on CEDAW, development, poverty and dignity.

I participated in the training arranged by PWESCR. I learned many things from eminent persons about ESCR, gender, development, poverty and dignity. It was a great opportunity for me to learn, and I

expanded my network of friends who are a great source of information and experience exchange. Every day I receive new information from different sources which is very helpful for me and my organization. Before attending the training, I was not very aware of ESCR, but I have now learned that it is a big issue for women's rights. I plan to use the ESCR concepts extensively in my work. The faculty was very knowledgeable and I enjoy working with them. My mentor gave a lot of energy to my work.

I have learned many things at the Institute. I have prepared a case study on a judgement and analysed it. From the case, I have realised that it is necessary to disseminate the landmark judgments to other commissioners in different districts. I have also learned how to prepare action project plans, arrange funds, arrange trainings and implement projects. It has been a great learning experience for me.

Selina works with ASK- literally, the Law and Mediation Centre – which is a human rights organization that takes a comprehensive approach to protecting and promoting human rights in Bangladesh. Since its inception the organization has demonstrated commitment to promoting social, economic and political rights.



*“I came with a gender lens and at the Institute, I got the human rights lens. I feel that if anybody fights for human rights in Bangladesh it will be me.”*

## Meet Kwalar Vera Muring from Cameroon

*“The Leadership Institute taught me the correlation of poverty and dignity with women’s rights.”*



Our leader from Cameroon is a trained teacher from Ecole Normale Superieur Annexe Bambili, a community peace mediator and a human rights activist. She is a development consultant and holds a Masters Degree in Gender and Peace Building from the United Nations Mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. As a peer counsellor, as well as a facilitator on gender mainstreaming, she promotes political, social and economic empowerment for women. She has diverse professional experience in training courses, workshops, volunteering and field work both in Cameroon and abroad. Her multidisciplinary knowledge and expertise is dedicated to the service of all organizations and structures working in the political, socio-economic and development sectors. She has a passion for human rights, community development projects, gender, youth, good governance and de-centralisation, local economic development, educational change and curriculum development, project management, the MDGs, agriculture and livelihood productivity, HIV/AIDS, climate change, and peace and conflict resolution. Presently, she is carrying out several human rights projects in Cameroon, specifically on gender based violence against women in the North West region of Cameroon.

### Vera at Work

The strategic objective of my project Action Plan for Cameroon Shadow Report is to mobilize to write a shadow report for Cameroon on ICESCR and to present it in Geneva alongside Cameroon’s State Report in November 2011.

It aims to educate other NGOs, women and the public on ICESCR, as well as enhance the leadership capacity of the women, NGOs and other stakeholders in writing future shadow reports.

The Centre for Human Rights and Gender Empowerment alongside SeP has, through a range of organizations working on human rights and gender issues, taken the initiative to write the shadow report for Cameroon. The 20 NGOs represented come from 10 regions of Cameroon, and the project is still exploring ways to mobilize additional NGOs and gain the most comprehensive view of the situation and diversify implementation of the ICESCR in Cameroon. At first, the project will focus

on gender-based discrimination and prevalence of violence against women; access to education, health facilities, work and employment; poverty and standard of living; and budgeting. The project also aims to educate other NGOs, women and the public on ICESCR, as well as enhance the leadership capacity of the women, NGOs and other stakeholders in writing future shadow reports.

ICESCR previously sounded just like any other International Convention that has little or no direct relationship with women. However, at the Leadership Institute, I was exposed to a deeper understanding of it and how it can be incorporated in my own work. One of the most exciting topics during the first phase of the Institute was the discussion on poverty and dignity and its correlation with women's rights. These sessions taught me that alleviating poverty involves facilitating attitudinal changes and respecting human dignity. I have constantly searched for the tools to do that and the Institute provided the answers.

During the first phase of training, we were drilled on writing a shadow report (NGO Report) from which I drew the inspiration to form a collective to write a shadow report for my country, Cameroon, and present it to the UN Committee on ESCCR (CESCR) in Geneva alongside Cameroon's State report in November 2011. This will also serve as an opportunity to educate other NGOs, women and the public on ICESCR and on how to write a shadow report. This report will also serve as an advocacy document for policy formation.

The knowledge I gained during this first phase of the Institute has enabled me to carry out various projects in my organization. PWESCR has established an active global network to enable gender activists, human rights activists, and key partners to exchange expertise and experience.

Ecumenical Service for Peace (SeP), the organization Vera works with, is engaged in a non-violent social transformation aimed at drawing on Christian values to create a society of participation based on justice, peace and reconciliation. SeP works on development issues that focus on gender, youth and children, human rights, the MDGs, curriculum development, women's empowerment, and peace and conflict resolution.



## Meet Lu Pin from China

*“The Leadership Institute taught me the human rights framework.”*



With a Master's in Chinese literature and as a senior journalist on women's rights, our leader from China has been working for civil gender organisations in China since 1999. Her work focuses on media gender research and advocacy, elimination of violence against women, networking of civil gender organisations and development of alternative media for women. She cooperates and participates in various research and advocacy projects of gender organisations, directs an alternative electronic media weekly which reports the opinions and actions of Chinese gender organisations and also writes feminist commentary for mainstream newspapers. She has participated in CEDAW-related activities in China since 2006. She is also currently the Executive Co-Partner of Media Monitor for Women Network (Beijing Gender Culture Communication Centre) and a member of the Gender and Development Network in China.

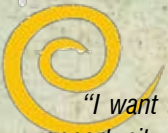
### Lu Pin at Work

My Action Project focused on an award offered by Media Monitor for Women Network to mass media agencies that included gender equality issues in their thematic coverage. Eight mass media agencies were awarded around the country and the public response was positive. My action project for the *Institute Award of Excellent Report on Women's Rights* revolved around development of a strategy towards this end.

Most Chinese mass media and mass media workers still have no interest in women's rights and gender equality. There is a general perception that women's rights are not a matter of concern because it is assumed that equality between women and men has already been achieved, and thus it is unnecessary to distinguish women's rights from the universal human rights discourse. People who do see the necessity to work on women's rights have the will, but often lack the knowledge and the approach. Civil gender organizations criticize this situation but their voice can hardly be heard. A strategy that could be applied to work in this direction is encouraging the mass media to raise public awareness and provide a model for both media and the public.

The project is targeting mass media managers, workers and the public in order to raise awareness of the mass media regarding women's rights, and encourage them to include and report on women's issues. Another goal is to extend the network of mass media workers who are supporters of women's rights by promoting communication among them, and finally, launch a public campaign to supervise media's report on women's rights.

Lu Pin works for Media Monitor for Women Network, which was established by media workers and scholars. For many years, it was the only NGO focusing on media in mainland China. Media Monitor for Women Network draws on research and training to promote media as a balanced way to represent a wide range of women's issues and eliminate gender stereotypes and discrimination. The main objective is to provide a good public environment for gender equality. The organization conducts training for media workers, works on media monitoring and research, and reports. It also organizes publicity activities, media column writing and alternative media for women.



*"I want to thank PWESCR for giving me this opportunity to meet different people. I consider this workshop excellent because I meet all my expectations to learn more about human rights."*

## Meet Silvia Marcela Yanez from Colombia

*“At the Leadership Institute, I learned about the mechanisms of international protection of women’s ESCR.”*



Our leader from Colombia is a lawyer who works on the defence and promotion of human rights. She has defended female victims of sexual violence who were displaced due to armed conflict. She has a strong social, political and communitarian engagement. She works for Sisma Mujer that defends women’s human rights in Colombia and Spain (especially those of migrant women) in the area of ‘access to justice’ by helping victims of sexual violence access truth, reparation and justice.

### Silvia at Work

Ensuring the Human Rights of Victims of Forced Displacement and Sexual Violence in Colombia, my action project for the institute, is aimed at collecting and systematizing information on sexual violence committed against victims in situations of poverty and on the lack of emergency humanitarian assistance.

Men and women are affected differently because of the situations of discrimination in which they live from birth. Women are particularly vulnerable in times of armed conflict. Men and women are affected differently because of the situations of discrimination in which they live from birth; these are fixed in peace and therefore degenerate and become worse during conflict. Thus, women suffer vulnerabilities exacerbated during armed conflict which disproportionately impact on their lives. The discrimination that women have historically experienced has been exacerbated and bred new forms of violence against them, deepening the exclusion they have suffered.

The necessary steps to achieve the objective of the project have been delineated. This includes discussing an international litigation strategy with the NGO lawyers and victims, preparing a communication to the Universal System about the situation of the victim, and finally submit-

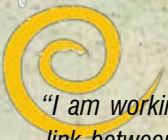


ting and monitoring the communication with the international body. The objective is to convince the international body to make recommendations to the Colombian state in order to reduce the impunity of sexual violence suffered by victims; ensure the ESCR of victims; and develop programmes to overcome the poverty of displaced women.

The case has been documented through interviews of victims and judicial information has been collected. The documentation included the context of the human rights violation with emphasis on the violation of ESCR and poverty. Lawyers identified the strategy for the trial before the international body; the team dismissed the idea of presenting to the CEDAW Committee. A lawyer discussed the case and strategy with women experts in Spain, and an argument was built to demonstrate the responsibility of the state.

The Institute helped me address the issue of sexual violence with a strong focus on the violation of ESCR in the context of armed conflict and forced displacement. The possibility of overcoming violence against women must be mediated by the guarantee of decent living conditions. Otherwise, women will not gain access to justice, truth and reparation.

Silvia works for Sisma Mujer, which is dedicated to the promotion and defence of human rights from a feminist approach in the area of 'access to justice,' helping victims of sexual violence access truth, reparation and justice. This work develops across four areas, each of which aims to implement strategies and projects that promote the eradication of discrimination and violence against women.



*"I am working on women's rights. I know there is a link between economic conditions and rights but in my organisation we do not make the link. That is the reason why I decided to come for this training."*

*"The Institute was great. I could understand that we have a common agenda all around the world."*

## Meet Manju Joshi from India

*“The training at the Institute helped me see the legal provisions in the PCM Act 2006, the PCPNDT Act 1994 and the Protection of Domestic Violence Act 2005 in light of the ESCR framework.”*



Our leader from India has been working for the last 10 years as a Co-Director at CEOEDECON, an NGO based in Rajasthan (India), involved in forming community-based organisations at the village, block and state levels. Previously, she worked in the government sector. She has vast experience in situational analysis and assessment of development programmes. As Co-Director at CEOEDECON, she is responsible for mobilisation and capacity-building in the areas of gender, Panchayati Raj, economic development and youth projects. She is also an executive member of DCNC, a network of volunteer organisations working in Rajasthan.

### Manju at Work

My Action Project for the Institute was Advocacy for Proper Implementation of Prohibition of Child Marriage (PCM) Act 2006, Pre-Conception and Pres-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act 1994 and Protection of Domestic Violence Act 2005: Enhancing the Value of the Girl Child and the Dignity of Women. It is a step towards ensuring implementation of existing laws.

Rajasthan has the second highest incidence of domestic violence (46 percent) in India; 16 percent of women have reported emotional violence by their spouse. Violence against women is a major violation



of human rights and a public health problem. 54 percent of the women feel that wife-beating is justifiable. Rajasthan recorded the highest number of cases registered under the Protection of Women from Domes-

tic Violence Act (PWDVA 2005). In reality, even after five years of the Act, its implementation and awareness is limited only to a small group of the people. There is no awareness and proper implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act among community, lawyers and clinic holders. None of the above mentioned laws have been effective in changing the situation, which makes advocacy on the issue even more important.

The first phase of my project concentrated on PCPNDT Act. We conducted four batches of capacity building workshops with lawyers and worked on awareness generation in the villages. Contact drives and monthly meetings at the village level were effective. Linkages with the

government officials and Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) were fruitful in counselling pregnant women and compiling related data.

Peer educators are making efforts to convince the masses that the birth of a girl child, too, calls for celebration. Changing attitudes is a difficult task, but the action project is already making a difference. A positive change in the attitude of the youth is already visible. They now sit on a common platform and discuss issues of sex selection and dignity of girls. Their understanding of these issues has broadened significantly.



The Leadership Institute was a tremendous opportunity to learn the basic concepts of human rights especially ESCR. I now understand more clearly that civil and political rights, by themselves, are insufficient to protect all human rights. I also understand better the fallacy that economic and social justice is only women's issues. The training at the Institute helped me see the legal provisions in the Acts in light of the ESCR framework. The session on ICESCR was particularly helpful.

Manju works for CECOEDECON, an NGO working in Rajasthan, India. It works with a rights-based approach on three basic themes: basic rights, livelihood and economic justice. Women's rights have been incorporated in all ongoing programs of the organization since its inception, and a separate unit was established in 2000 to ensure gender equity and equality at the community and organization levels.

## Meet Praveer Peter from India

*“At the Leadership Institute I learnt about the link between formal and informal institutions and the role these can play in gender equality.”*



With a background in social work and sociology, our leader from India has been working with indigenous tribal communities of Eastern India. His major engagement has been with the tribal identity groups, health rights and women's groups in Jharkhand. The journey of discovering and self learning with the tribal women's movement has helped in the development of his feminism.

With Gender, Livelihoods and Resources Forum (GLRF), he has campaigned on and documented women's property rights, violence against women and related gender issues. His expertise lies in gender, sexuality, culture and communications. He is the Managing Trustee of Solidarity for Peace, a development organisation based in Ranchi, Jharkhand, and his recent work is with youth, sexuality and communication issues—all from a human rights perspective.

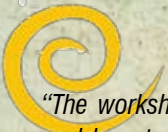
### Praveer at Work

Understanding Men's Perception of Gender/Gender Equity and Carving an Action Agenda to Include Men in Women's ESCR, my action project, is a unique attempt to involve men in preventing violence and against women and in promoting women's ESCR.

Mainstream movements led by men have given little space to women's ESCR issues. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and all forms of discrimination against women are being targeted by women's movements and women's groups across regions in high numbers. The strategy to involve men to counter GBV and bring gender equity has been constantly accepted, however, there are very few groups who have taken up the task. Thus, while women's movement is front and centre with its assertion of rights, mainstream movements led by men have given little space to women's ESCR issues. It is in this context that the issue has been identified by the Solidarity Centre. The centre has identified gender as one of its focus themes, having long been involved through GLRF. The objectives of my project are to document and understand

the perspectives of young college boys, rural male youth, opinion leaders, tribal *panchayat pradhans* and other male leaders in social movements.

Praveer is associated with Solidarity for Peace. The organization has evolved from an empowerment cum rights approach that applies its intervention in various themes: gender, health, communications and networking. It has a feminist perspective and works closely with GLRF at the state and national level. In collaboration with other forums and networks, it organizes small community-level studies and consultations on health rights. The centre uses the art of expression (songs and theatre), print, video and digital media to communicate social development messages.



*“The workshop taught me how painful democracy is and how to be inclusive. I saw very strong feminist women and also men. I feminist workshop tries to ignore men. I did not see that here.”*

## Meet Sapna Shahani from India

*“Training at the Institute has empowered me as an individual, especially in my work on citizen journalism.”*



Our leader from India co-conceptualised and currently directs Women Aloud Videoblogging for Empowerment (WAVE). She grew up in Bombay and moved to the United States to study mass communications. In the US, she worked at Berkeley Community Media (BCM), a public TV station near San Francisco, as a manager for over five years. At BCM, she became inspired to use media as a tool for social change as she helped local residents access education and facilities at the media centre as a means of democratic communication with their community. She researched Indian media policy at the graduate level at San Francisco State University and was keen to return to India where community radio licensing had begun. She won a Digital Media and Learning Competition Award in 2009 which seed funded the WAVE project and is now helping develop a sustainable social enterprise to continue empowering young women with ICT skills. She strongly believes that young women must be encouraged to ideate solutions and be mentored as leaders if ESCR is to be achieved.

### Sapna at Work

My Action Project for the institute, NGO Reporting for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Advocacy is to design a video advocacy tool for NGOs during human rights records review.

My project is to prepare an outline/script plan for a video advocating civil society groups to engage with the CESCR by submitting NGO reports when their respective countries come up for review of their human rights records.

I visited Delhi to discuss the project, where we drafted a rough outline after watching past videos on the subject. A final outline for the video was drafted and discussed. I created a survey to fit prospective interviewees in the script and have sent it to fellow participants of the Institute.

At the Institute, I learned about the importance of NGOs submitting

their reports to the CESC. I was convinced that I should change my action project from drafting a business plan for my NGO, WAVE to planning this advocacy video. Thus, we started working on this project after the Institute. The training made this project possible. There is immense enthusiasm around the action project, although I am still struggling to get support to design the plan.

Although the subject is outside my main line of work, it fits into the broad objective of helping women find a voice. I have gained a human rights and ESCR perspective from the Institute. Previously, the UN felt very far away. The Institute has helped me develop an admiration for people working at the grassroots level; I believe I can contribute by helping to ease the flow of communication, and am trying to network with NGOs to take the work forward.

WAVE, the organization Sapna is associated with, works with the mission to encourage women around India to voice their perspectives on community development and collectively strive for positive change using a shared digital platform.



*"I know a ton more about human rights  
than I did before."*

## Meet Shreema Ningomban from India

*“The Leadership Institute helped me understand the concept of feminization of poverty and issues of gender discrimination.”*



Our leader from India obtained a Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Delhi, completed an M. Phil. in Political Science at the same institution, and worked as a Teaching Assistant in the same faculty. She is currently a lecturer in the Department of Political Science in Nambol. She is also associated with Human Rights Alert (HRA) a human rights organisation based in Manipur, and has been working with EVFAM. She writes about social issues in newspapers and for news websites, and has published numerous poems in newspapers and journals including Our Private Literature published by Burning Voices and Muse India.

### Shreema at Work

My action project was titled Advocacy for the Social and Economic Rights of Widows in the Conflict-Affected Regions of Manipur. It is focused on social and economic rights of widows whose husbands have been killed by the armed forces. The project will try to seek means and ways to get economic assistance for the families of victims by petitioning to related government departments.

The project would also like to generate a discussion at the legislative level to find ways to help the families of those victims by questioning the acts under which they are not given compensation using the RTI (Right to Information) Act as a tool. The focus is on gender awareness and rights advocacy. I am working through Extra-Judicial Victim's Family Association Manipur (EVFAM).

Interviews of selected widows have been conducted and case studies compiled. I met with the Under Secretary of Education and tried to convince him of the need for documentation of the specific number of children of these widows before designing and implementing any policy. I held a discussion on the property rights of women. In the



next few days, I will be filing an RTI application to determine under which Act they are being deprived of compensation.

I now understand better the need to clarify problem areas and streamline strategy to redress economic and social rights.

This project is not far removed from my organisation's objective but until now we had dealt only with legal rights of widows; no effort had been made towards economic assistance. Before the Leadership Institute, I was aware of the problem but could not visualise the route to the solution. Now I feel I am equipped with a strategy and have some idea of the direction to take. My faculty mentor helped me in refining my plan. He helped me understand the minute details of what could go wrong and most importantly, the importance of the role of institutions. The biggest personal gain has been the ability to identify solutions from the perspective of violation of rights. I have also gained clarity on the problem and on how to put it into practice.

Shreema is associated with HRA, a non-governmental voluntary organization based in India committed to the cause of human rights. The organization is involved in advocacy, human rights monitoring, investigating and reporting, human rights education, campaigns, solidarity, assisting other organizations in publication and linking people to legal aid and providing assistance to victims to access justice.



*“Women I am working with are not even aware of their rights. They have been termed as insurgents. There is a lot of stigma because of which they cannot marry again nor can they get a job. They have not managed to get any compensation. There is also the question of inheritance. I was specifically looking for an ESCR training.”*

## Meet Mildred Crawford from Jamaica

*"I was ignorant of the role of the human rights legal framework until I joined the Leadership Institute."*



Our leader from Jamaica is an Artificial Inseminator, with a specialty in pigs; and was instrumental in the formalization of the Jamaica Pig Farmers Association. Crawford became a member of the Jamaica Network of Rural Women Producers (JNRWP) 10 years ago. She served as Public Relations Officer before assuming office of President in 2007. In this role, she advocates for the socio-economic improvement in the quality of life of marginalized rural women. She has represented these vulnerable groups at civil society meetings of the British Commonwealth in St. Lucia. She was also selected to serve as a member of the Bureau of Women's Affairs CEDAW Technical Working Committee during the preparation of the Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports to the United Nations. To ensure that rural women understand the importance of standards, Crawford was instrumental in organizing several entrepreneurial programs and tours. She is a very passionate advocate against the exploitation of rural women and speaks out regularly about the marginalization of these populations.

### Mildred at Work

Building Awareness Around Issues of Female Economic Empowerment, and Gender Equality Within the Context of the Jamaican Economy was the action project I designed to identify and address the barriers at the household, community and market levels to women's leadership in agricultural markets. It seeks to identify collectively the best market for women and explore collective actions.

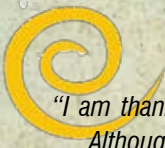
My project has been framed within an understanding of inequality as a result of power relations that favour certain sectors of society and is generated by the policies and practices of the state and other actors. My project will specifically be guided by the following objectives : to identify women as participants rather than beneficiaries; to identify collectively the best market for women and explore collective actions; to identify the most suitable strategies and policies for the promotion of effective participation that can lead to economic empowerment of rural women.

The project is anticipated to result in the development of evidence based recommendations that enhance the framework of economic empowerment of rural women in Jamaica.

Community meetings for selection of community and engagement with the grass-root/rural women have been completed. Research to help select a focus group to capture data for the development of community profile has been completed. Capacity building activities to facilitate business plan training and business management procedures have been undertaken.

Jamaica Network of Rural Women Producers has endorsed the Huairou Commission Statement and seeks to create avenues to empower rural women to participate at all levels. This is detailed in a proposal which was recently submitted to UN Women to assist in training 10 rural women in Research Methodology, Introduction to SPSS software and Professional Writing Skills and Documentation. This will allow the issues and challenges faced by rural women to be presented more professionally and evidence based. It will strengthen our voice at all levels and reduce the discrimination that prevents rural women from communicating with the different statuses of society.

JNRWP, the organization Mildred is associated with, works alongside various stakeholders to foster the economic and social development of rural women in Jamaica. It focuses on the social and economic conditions of rural women and seeks to assist their empowerment to improve the quality of their lives.



*"I am thankful that I was able to learn new terms.  
Although I am in the field for quite a while,  
I had never come across the term Justiciability."*

## Meet Abhiram Roy from Nepal

*“The Leadership Institute trainings helped incorporate issues of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the action project’s approach.”*



Our leader from Nepal has a Master’s Degree in Public Health, specialising in epidemiology, almost five years of experience working in various sectors, and currently works for Women Rehabilitation Centre Nepal (WOREC). He is the Program Coordinator for Women Health Rights and also manages the ESCR campaign of WOREC, tackling social justice and human rights issues. Within WOREC’s framework, he is responsible for planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on a number of projects on women’s empowerment, women’s health rights, empowerment of marginalised communities and violence against women. He conducts training and orientation for health care providers and community based organisations on women’s health rights and issues related to gender-based violence. He also organises awareness-raising programs and RH health camps.

### Abhiram at Work

The objective of my action project, Holistic Approach to End Obstetric Fistula (OF) in Nepal is to rehabilitate and reintegrate the patients living with fistula.

There are a lot of challenges and complexities within the women’s health domain in Nepal. One of the biggest challenges is OF. Millions of girls and young women in resource-poor countries are living in shame and isolation, often abandoned by their husbands and excluded by their families and communities. They usually live in abject poverty, shunned or blamed by society. They are unable to work and earn money, which makes them fall deeper into poverty and further despair. The health system is poor and gender insensitive because it is not readily accessible to girls/women with special health care needs, and it does not provide quality maternal healthcare and basic/emergency obstetric care to all women who are in need of such service and counselling. Harmful social and cultural norms and values lead to harmful traditional practices and lack of access to maternal and obstetric care.

Fistula acts as the double/triple sorrow for the woman who suffers. She suffers from physical problems as well as the mental trauma of losing her child and being an object of discrimination from the family and society. The overall objective of the campaign is to prevent fistula; find the cases through baseline survey; treat and counsel the patients, the family and the community; and rehabilitate and reintegrate the patients living with fistula.

During treatment, 46 cases of urine incontinence were found through household surveys. Among them, 17 fistula survivors were diagnosed and received corrective surgery. On the aspect of prevention, a household survey was done to find the cases of fistula, socio-demographic factors of fistula survivors, etc. There was an orientation on causes and consequences of OF, as well as a screening through health camps. Some IEC material was developed.

The mentors helped us understand and improve our action projects. They advised us on the effective implementation of the project and helped gain an understanding on gender discrimination and the interventions necessary for the elimination of GBV.

WOREC, the organization Abhiram works with, has been working in the sector of human rights for two decades. It works to assure rights of women. To establish social justice, WOREC promotes and strengthens community-based organizations by conducting programs at the grassroots, national, and international levels.



*Raise Awareness, Orientation and Fistula Screening Camps in community*

## Meet Kripa Basnyat from Nepal

*"The Leadership Institute taught me that there can be no higher priority than the right to live with dignity."*



Our leader from Nepal is a Programme Officer at Himalayan Human Rights Monitors (HimRights) where she was responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of the Women, Peace and Reconciliation Programme. Her main activities included serving as a liaison between women and girl victims of armed conflict, relevant government stakeholders, armed conflicting parties, I/NGOs, UN agencies, social mobilizers, teachers, and communities. She is also responsible for the preparation of annual reports and the management of logistics.

### Kripa at Work

Empowering Women of Bhojpur through Peace Building Programme, my action project for the institute, creates a platform for conflict-afflicted women and adolescent girls to share their experience of victimhood and transcend the need for revenge and build empathy and compassion for opposing sides, with a focus on empowerment to seek and access justice.

My project consisted of a four day workshop and a one day public hearing on 'Peace Building and Reconciliation' in each project district. The public hearing was preceded by a one day orientation. The target groups were women and adolescent girls directly affected by armed conflict, and included ex-combatants and marginalized groups, as well as representatives from various political parties and government stakeholders.



*Transformation of a participant during the program.*

The Reconciliation Workshop was a safe and dignified platform for trauma healing. Women were encouraged to share their experience of


victimhood and transcend the need for revenge and build empathy and compassion for opposing sides, with a focus on empowerment to seek and access justice. Conflict-affected women and adolescent girls gained confidence to raise their voices and demand justice. They expressed their grievances and directly questioned government stakeholders on issues such as disappearances, killings, torture, rape, and sexual abuse, return of land and/or homes, compensation, reintegration and reconciliation policies. Government stakeholders and human rights activists promptly addressed their issues and made commitments for possible solutions. These spaces created an opportunity for the stakeholders to see the conflict from a gender lens. Public hearings were conducted with a participatory approach where the voices, concerns, and issues of the participants—rather than the theoretical approaches of conflict transformation—were the focus. The workshops and public hearings proved to be fruitful. They were focused on rights of the participants, and remarkable behavioural and attitudinal changes were visible amongst the participants and the stakeholders.

A participant of Bhojpur did not even utter a single word during the “Hot Potato” game (activity to review a daylong workshop). After attending four days of the workshop, however, she transformed into a confident and vocal person; not even hesitating to question the stakeholders on the public hearing day.



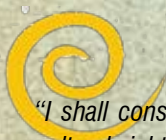
*The workshop hall.*

Before attending the Institute, I was oblivious of the distinction between Civil and Political Rights (CPR) and ESCR. After the training, I had a clear vision of ESCR which made it possible for me to address issues regarding health, education and housing. During the training, there were many topics that influenced me in my work. I have incorporated PANEL, the concept of inherent dignity and the intersection of women’s rights and ESCR, into my projects, particularly in the context where internal conflicts and wars have led to mass-scale displacement and



destruction of property and livelihoods, placing women in an even more vulnerable situation. It is necessary for the state to address their ESCR and for us to facilitate in the process of accessing justice. The sessions helped me explore all the possible dimensions of ESCR to facilitate women conflict victims/survivors in accessing their right to survival. The Institute further strengthened my understanding of issues such as women's access to resources and decision-making. Existing gaps were easily traced by wearing my 'gender-sensitive glasses.'

Kripa works for HimRights, which is committed to defending the rights of poor, marginalized and socially-excluded communities and individuals, with a special focus on women, children and youth. HimRights' vision has been to realize international solidarity toward human rights promotion where social, cultural, economic, civil and political justice prevails.



*"I shall consciously incorporate economic, social, and cultural rights and mechanism in my work in the field of education and displacement."*



## Meet Namrata Sharma from Nepal

*“The Leadership Institute strengthened our belief that what we are doing is on the right track.”*



Our leader from Nepal has over 20 years of work experience in setting up institutions for sustainable and local/international development with a focus on microfinance, de-centralisation, NGO capacity-building, gender, advocacy and women's rights, HIV/AIDS and journalism. She has presented papers at a range of international events held in various countries throughout Asia, North America, Europe and Africa; and has also hosted a number of international workshops and seminars on microfinance in several countries in Asia. Currently, she is freelancing and is a governing board member of RHEST Nepal and BWDA Institute of Development Finance (BIDFin) in Tamil Nadu, India among others. She is also the Publisher/Editor of *Nariswor*, a quarterly magazine published from Kathmandu. She is currently on the board of several organisations in Nepal, the United States and India and is freelancing to help set up institutions and develop sustainable business for the poor and marginalised. She has served as the Founding Managing Director of the Centre for Microfinance (CMF) Nepal and the first Director of the Indian School of Microfinance for Women (ISMW) in Ahmedabad, India.

### Namrata at Work

The action project I undertook as part of the institute was Addressing Women's ESCR in the Upcoming Constitution of Nepal. It aims at information dissemination related to ESCR to the general public in Nepal through the magazine *Nariswor*.

In the last few years, *Nariswor* has been disseminating information related to women's ESCR to the general public in Nepal and particularly to girls in grades eight to twelve in 17 rural districts of the country. *Nariswor* has been accessed by at least 400 schools in rural parts of Nepal. There has been an additional focus on addressing women's human rights issues related to health education and safety.

Namrata is associated with *Nariswor* quarterly magazine, which was started mainly to give a forum to women writers of Nepal to publish their literary work. The main goal of the magazine is to raise women's voice in each issue on various aspects that affect policy, lives and livelihood of the people of Nepal, particularly women. It has raised issues related to the formation of the constituent assembly, both during the civil unrest and in daily life. Women Self Help Society (WSS) is an NGO established after the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990. It is now in the process of launching meaningful work in enabling women leaders to raise their voices and make a difference in the new upcoming Republic State of Nepal.

## Meet Rehana Wagha from Pakistan

*“Training at the Institute enabled me to widen the scope of my study and incorporate in it the impact of insurgency by bringing women’s ESCR into the spotlight.”*



Our leader from Pakistan works for Damaan Development Organization (DDO) in the Middle Indus Valley in a volunteer capacity. Before this, she was part of Siraiki Tareemit (women) Sanjha as a student activist. As a member of the most remote and most underdeveloped part of Pakistan, she was fortunate to attend educational institutions in an urban area. Now, with her maintained links to her home area, she is motivated to work for gender equity and justice. She is currently working on a thesis for an M.Phil. in International Relations at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) regarding state building and gender equity in post 9/11 Afghanistan. For the past seven years, she has taught at different institutions in Islamabad and is presently associated with the Centre for Excellence in Gender Studies at QAU as visiting lecturer, where she teaches a course on gender, security and peace.

### Rehana at Work

My project, Islamic Militancy and Women’s Agency: Impact on Women’s ESCR in Swat Region, looks at the role of women as an agency in Islamic insurgency and counter-insurgency in the Swat region.

I have undertaken a field research project on the role of women as an agency in Islamic insurgency and counter-insurgency in the Swat region. There is substantial debate on women’s agency in armed conflict situations under the discipline of gender studies, but very few case studies exist to inform us on its evolution and change during different stages of conflicts. My focus is on exploring the role and participation of women in the formative stages of Islamic insurgency in early 2000, and how it changed in the aftermath of extreme women’s seclusion, mass displacement, resettlement and conditions of counter-insurgency phase started in 2008. I am also examining the impact of insurgency and counter insurgency on women’s ESCR, with a special focus on the reasons for a declining trend in girls’ education.

It is well-reported that some sections of women in Swat, especially elderly and middle-aged women, supported the Taliban movement through donations and other measures in its early formative stage in 2002. Women were among the chief audience of Mullah Fazal Ullah, who invoked the notion of piety and women's rights in Islam in his regular sermons. However, the support of women to the Taliban poses perplexing questions for gender scholars and women's rights activist.

I have visited the region and conducted interviews with internally-displaced men and women to get an insight into their lives during the conflict and find out how their lives were impacted with the counter-insurgency measures taken by the government. Although the majority has returned to their homes, they are still struggling to find security and livelihoods. I have managed to visit Swat, although the situation is still very tense. I was unable to meet with everyone, but did manage to speak with some women and displaced people. My field engagements continue as I have simultaneously begun to write the first draft of the paper.



Before attending the Institute, I was only focusing on Islamic militancy and women's agency. What I learned at the Institute is how to view issues from a woman's economic and cultural rights' perspective. The concept of women's dignity is also something I learned.

My faculty mentor helped me convert my research questions into a streamlined study that complemented the clarity I gained in the classroom sessions. I am a teacher, so a practitioner's perspective is often what I miss. I was able to gain this from the Institute and now I hope to see more of that in my action project presentation.

Rehana works with DDO, an organization which is recognized at the national level for its coverage of issues, advocacy and networking, as well as for its initiatives on gender and water, girls' education, indigenous and tribal peoples, biodiversity conservation and conservation. DDO is a pioneer in taking up the issues of indigenous peoples of the Indus River.

## Meet Lahiru Dilshan Hettiarachchi from Sri Lanka

*“The Leadership Institute equipped me with comprehensive knowledge on ESCR and helped me look at ESCR in a different perspective.”*



Our leader from Sri Lanka is a project officer at EQUAL GROUND. His responsibilities include designing, monitoring and evaluating projects on gender, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, women's rights and human rights. Presently, he is conducting a special project to address violence against rural lesbian and bisexual women in Sri Lanka together with Women Defining Peace. He is also working as a trainer in the field of gender, sexuality and women's rights. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Science (Agriculture), was trained in Good Governance and Democracy at University of Virginia, and has worked as an intern at Human Rights Campaign in the United States. He also works as a church organist at St. Mary's Catholic Cathedral and St. Mark's Anglican Church in Badulla, Sri Lanka.

### Dilshan at Work

My action project, Sensitizing Women's Organizations on ESCR Violations of Rural Lesbian and Bisexual Women in Sri Lanka is an attempt at spreading awareness regarding the rights of lesbian and bisexual women.

Rural Lesbian and Bisexual (LB) women in Sri Lanka have suffered greatly due to social stigma and legal barriers attached to their sexual orientation. Their ESCR has been violated. Therefore, it is extremely vital to sensitize grassroots women's organizations on these issues



Training with 10 satellite officers

and make them aware of rights of LB women. The second part of this project will work to document ESCR violations of LB women.

We held a workshop with ten women leaders from five

women's organizations in Anuradhapura, Galle, Nuwara Eliya and Kallutara Districts. Women were trained on gender, sexuality, ESCR and basic principles of counselling and documentation. These organizations have already started working on these



*Training with 10 satellite officers*

issues. They coordinated with us and conducted workshops in their respective regions to spread the message at the grassroots level. We have documented around 15 case studies on LB women. These case studies have yet to be analyzed.

I have been able to disseminate what I learned at the Institute. It was the first time I was made aware of the new grounds on General Comment 20 – Article 2.2, and was pleased to know that sexual orientation and gender identity are also incorporated. The session gave me the courage to work further on these issues.

Dilshan works with EQUAL GROUND, a human rights organization seeking political and human rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals in Sri Lanka. It firmly believes that lesbian and bisexual women's rights are part of women's rights.

## Meet Nalini Rathnarajah from Sri Lanka

*“The Leadership Institute helped me see everything through the gender lens.”*



Our leader from Sri Lanka belongs to an ethnic and religious minority group from Batticaloa District (Sri Lanka) and works in war-torn areas of Sri Lanka promoting human rights. She is engaged with the International Movement Against All Kinds of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) - Asia Committee. She is also involved with Peoples' SAARC and is a member of the Gender Thematic Group in the South Asian Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE). In addition, she is also a member of the women's caucus of the Sri Lankan programme of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, as well as a board member of Synergy, an NGO. She ran for a parliamentary seat in the 2010 elections and has extended her human rights advocacy activities to the UN level by participating in the UN Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva.

### Nalini at Work

My action project titled Fact Finding – ESCR Challenges of War-Affected Single Women addresses the ESCR issues of war-affected single women.

Approximately 89,000 women have been affected directly by three decades of war in Sri Lanka. In the Eastern province, where I come from, there are 49,000 war-affected women; in Batticaloa alone, there are 26,000 women-headed households. Most of these widows are under 25 years of age. My project addresses ESCR issues of war-affected single women.

A questionnaire has been completed by the target group and three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) have been conducted. Individual interviews are presently being conducted by the team.

The challenge for me has been that women are unwilling to speak because they feel threatened. The army camps are nearby and they feel they cannot speak openly about the situation. They are even scared to be photographed. Young girls have been raped.

In Sri Lanka, NGOs are called traitors. They are restricted from working autonomously in human rights areas. (However, it is permissible to be constructing toilets, etc.)

The Institute helped in preparing the questionnaire, FGD and interviews based on ESCR from a gender perspective. Despite funding problems, what has emerged is rich documentation in Tamil, which I am now translating. Empowering us with fact-finding results is the output from the action project.

I was already familiar with and working on issues related to ESCR, but the gender perspective is what I have learned, particularly how to apply it at the policy level.

Nalini works for IMADR. The organization's primary focus is to combat racism, racial discrimination and multiple-discrimination (in particular, discrimination based on both race and gender) as they cut across the following areas: eliminating discrimination based on work and descent; eliminating exploitative migration and trafficking in women and children; upholding the rights of indigenous peoples; upholding the rights of minorities; eliminating racial discrimination in the administration of justice; and strengthening international human rights protection mechanisms for the elimination of discrimination and racism and promoting their effective use by the discriminated.



*"The opportunity to be with different people from different parts of the world, learning their particular contexts, issues from their own perspective is what I learnt. Every individual's stories surprised, saddened and at times made me happy. We have learnt to share every moment, from personal to professional affairs."*

## Meet Sithara Shreen Abdul Saroor from Sri Lanka

*“It is due to PWESCR’s Leadership Institute that I was able to rethink discussing such a heavy and politicized issue within the ESCR framework.”*



Our leader from Sri Lanka is one of the founders of Mannar Women’s Development Federation (MWDF), which addresses the needs of women victims of war in the north of Sri Lanka. She promoted the implementation of the Shakti gender equality programme of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and coordinated CIDA’s Human Rights and Peace Building funds. She was a peacemaker at the John B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice in San Diego, California, United States and was awarded in 2005 a two-year fellowship to build a Model Resettlement Village (MRV). Her first degree was in Business Administration and her post-graduate area of specialty was Feminist Studies. In 2008, she was awarded the Voices of Courage Award by the International Rescue Committee’s Women and Refugees’ Commission for her international and regional work on highlighting the plight of the internally-displaced women of north and east Sri Lanka. In 2011, she won the 5th International Bremen Peace Award under the category of public engagement for peace and justice. She is also a board member of South Asians for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights and Development, founder of Women’s Action Network and a representative of Ashoka Innovators for the Public.

### Shreen at Work

My action project, Surrendeers: a Video Documentary that Captures the Plight of Women’s Socio- economic and Security Conditions in Post-war Sri Lanka raises concern about women in situations of conflict.

With the defeat of the LTTE, many female combatants and women who willingly or unwillingly worked with LTTE, surrendered to the Sri Lanka military. Initially, it was extremely difficult to get their details, however in the last few months the government has released many ‘ex-combatants’ after ‘rehabilitation.’ Their reintegration back into the community has become a critical concern for women’s groups in the north. Many surrendeers were not combatants but those who worked in the LTTE administration, while others were forcibly recruited hours before the end of the war. The government rehabilitation programme and the

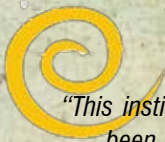


monitoring system after the release of these surrendees identify these women combatants as posing a potential threat and therefore, restrict their movements. People in the North are afraid that 'if something happens' the security forces will first seek the person who was released from the 'rehabilitation' centre and hence the community often chooses to stay away from these women for fear that they will draw the unwelcome attention of the security forces in some way.

The documentary has been completed and screened for the international community.

We filmed this documentary in very difficult circumstances. We cannot show people's faces because revealing identities of people can put them in danger. Some of these women decided to withdraw from their interviews later. An uncut version of the documentary was used to lobby with IOM to re-programme their livelihood activities for these women.

Shreen is one of the founders of MWDF. The organization works with the mission to improve the social, economic and cultural status and the rights of women in the district of Mannar. It provides free counselling and legal aid for women affected by violence and runs an empowerment centre that not only provides protective custody for battered women but also gives them the skills, microcredit and marketing facilities.



*"This institute is going to change the way I have been addressing minority rights issues."*

## Meet Sudharshi Anushaya Collure from Sri Lanka

*"I feel that the Action Project has been a good way of applying and 'giving weight' to what I learned during the Phase I classroom module."*



Our leader from Sri Lanka is attached to the Law and Society Trust (LST), a research and advocacy organisation based in Colombo, as a Programme Officer of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Programme. Her work entails administrative responsibilities and implementation of research projects. She has also been involved in conducting research on the Indian and Sri Lankan Free Trade Agreement, the impact of the global financial crisis on female workers in the Free Trade Zones, as well as on the reintegration of returnee female migrant workers. As a part of her work, she has also organised regional workshops and participated in the local and South Asian organising committee of the People's SAARC event in 2008 in Colombo.

### Anushaya at Work

The State of the Right to Education in the Plantation Community, my action project for the Institute, focuses on the lack of equal right to education in Tamil for the plantation community.

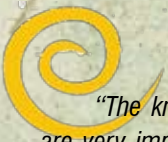
The research was carried out in two provinces: Central and Sabaragamuwa. Initial field visits to the Central and Sabaragamuwa provinces to obtain data have been completed and the process of drafting the report has commenced.

While working on the action project, I learned many significant lessons: the crucial importance of the right to information and transparency in implementation of state policy at local level; the need to have a database with current statistical and other information on plantation schools in the country; and the importance of creative thinking with regard to effective advocacy in the education sector in Sri Lanka.

ESCR has been important in narrowing down the theme of the project. The template given by the Leadership Institute helped to define the project within a structure. My faculty mentor helped tighten the concept of the project through his timely comments and insights. The

mentor's input was significant in narrowing the scope of my research and gaining focus. So far, he has helped me deal with almost all the difficulties in my project. It is very good to have mentors – you can ask questions when you are stuck. At this stage, to meet my mentor was like therapy for me.

Anushaya is associated with LST, a Colombo-based organization with the objective to promote the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. There are three main programme areas in the organization- human rights in conflict; civil and political rights; and economic, social and cultural rights. The organisation engages in women's rights mainly through research and advocacy at the national and regional level.



*“The knowledge of the ESCR mechanisms are very important to the work I do. The basic thing that I learnt is the practical side of theories. Till now I was not able to get that from anywhere else.”*

## Meet Lydia Komuhangi from Uganda

*“At the Institute, I first learned how the government of Uganda, as the duty bearer, was not doing its work, although it had signed and ratified all nine core international human rights treaties.”*



Our leader from Uganda was appointed by the board of directors to the position of Executive Director of GWEFODE in 2007, a position which she still holds today. Prior to joining GWEFODE, she worked as the Marketing Manager at Simba Telecom. She works to promote and protect women’s human rights, especially ESCR and civil and political rights, which have given her a wealth of knowledge of gender inequalities resulting from the way the girl child is raised and protected.

### Lydia at Work

My action project Gender Equality Advocacy and Domestic Violence Prevention Project brought together different actors to raise awareness and campaign for women’s ESCR.

In Uganda, particularly south-western Uganda, there is rampant violation of women’s ECSR. The denial of women’s economic and social rights, including land rights, has led to the additional denial of the right to food as a result of land disputes. This has, in turn, increased violence against women, discrimination and marginalization by men.

My project, mainly focused on the right to land and brought together different actors to raise awareness and campaign for women’s ESCR.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment for Development (GWEFODE) organized a two-day sensitization workshop that involved 30 human rights activists—both women and men, representatives of civil society organizations, media, volunteers, local council leaders and police. The training focused on women’s ESCR, with the right to land and housing at the forefront, and highlighted how violation of these rights has contributed to violence against women. It discussed peaceful resolution methods of land and civil conflicts and provided instruction in methods of constructive resolution of land conflicts by raising

participants' awareness of their own behaviour in these situations and by building women's rights and peace support clubs. Women's rights and peace support club will be established in Buhara Sub County.

To ensure that members continue networking, GWEFODE will continue capacity building through an annual two-day training workshop. Another women's rights and peace support club will be established in Buhara Sub County on May 25, 2011. GWEFODE has also organized school visits. There has been an increase on the number of reported complaints, which is directly attributed to the project.

The Institute helped incorporate the human rights legal framework and increased my knowledge and understanding of the implementation of projects.

The sessions helped me understand that ESCR are positive and distributive rights and that they require the state to progressively ensure the provision of social goods and services that a person cannot live without—food, housing, education and social security. We sensitized communities and their leaders from the village to the district level and informed them that it is the state's responsibility to ensure ESCR are achieved and protected. The Institute helped me incorporate the rights-based approach and also the PANEL frame work, where we encouraged women to participate politically in order to have access to decision making.



*Participants pose for a photo after the workshop*

Lydia works for GWEFODE, which was formed to promote gender equality and strengthen women's ability to be active participants in the governance and development arena, as well as contribute to the strengthening of the women's movement in Uganda. It works to protect, promote and strengthen institutions that bolster the capacity of women, both in relation to men and in their realization of human rights and democracy in Uganda.



## The Mentors Who Made it All Possible

The core faculty for the Leadership Institute in Women's Economic, Social and Cultural rights comprises of experts and leaders who have been actively involved in ESCR issues from the local to the global level. The core faculty assists in building the Institute, and also mentors participants throughout.

### Meet Priti Darooka

*.....the inspiration and the energy behind the institute*

Priti Darooka is the Founder and Executive Director of the Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR). Darooka was previously at the Ford Foundation in New York (Human Rights Unit) and at UNIFEM, where she worked on violence against women, indicators and assessment and coordinating UNIFEM's work in Afghanistan. As a consultant to the Centre



for Women's Global Leadership, she organised a women's rights hearing at the UN Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa. She was the National Campaign Coordinator with UNITE for their Global Justice for Garment Workers Campaign. Darooka has also worked with Manavi, a South Asian women's organisation working with women and children who faced violence in their lives. She was also involved in the Stop FTAA (Free Trade Area of Americas) campaign and focused on different aspects of trade, and women's lives, from a feminist and human rights perspective.

## Meet Gagan Sethi

*.....the mentor who was like therapy*



As Executive Secretary of Janvikas since 1987 and Managing Trustee since 1997, Gagan Sethi has been involved in initiating and coordinating programmes sponsored by Janvikas. Sethi has provided training, organisational development (OD), project planning and evaluation support in institution building to various NGOs, government programmes and funding agencies in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India. Team building, conflict resolution and turnaround OD intervention and planning, monitoring and evaluation for NGOs and development support organisations are his specialty areas. He has designed and conducted over 400 training programmes for groups in rural and urban development on a range of issues covering forestry cooperatives, ecology, organisation of scheduled castes and tribes, lobbying and advocacy, youth, women and development and training of trainers. Sethi is the chairperson of PWESCR's board.

## Meet Jerald Joseph

*..... who makes learning fun*



Jerald Joseph is the Executive Director of Dignity International and is responsible for programme design, content and methodologies for the Global Learning Programme for Human Rights in Development and the Community Learning Programme. With over 12 years of experience in training, facilitating and designing a range of learning programmes at the community and organisational levels, Joseph has also worked as a training consultant for the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma, Pax Romana and the Regional Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. He facilitates group processes with maximum participation from people, using learning methods that are creative, provoking and enjoyable.

## Meet Maria Virginia Bras Gomes

*.....who brings in a truly international perspective*



Born in Goa, and currently based in Lisbon, Maria Virginia Bras Gomes works as a Senior Social Policy Advisor in the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity. Since 2003, Bras Gomes has been a member, and is currently the Vice-Chair, of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. She is also part of the Scientific Committee for the Third World Forum on Human Rights (Nantes); on the Board of Trustees of the

European Roma Rights Centre Foundation (Hungary); on the European Social Network high level advisory group on de-institutionalisation; on the Board of the Portuguese UNICEF Committee and on the Executive Committee of the International Centre for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Additionally, she is a Trustee with PWESCR International, a sister organisation for PWESCR.

*“The objective is to help the participants incorporate ESCR into their work. The learning happened because of bridging the gap. ESCR emphasis is good in the training. The assumption was that the participants came with women’s human rights lens and the objective in this training was to add the ESCR lens.”*



## Our Experts

*.....who inspire new thinking and unravel new possibilities*

### Meet Kamla Bhasin



A social scientist by training, Kamla Bhasin has been actively engaged with issues related to development, education, gender and media for over 35 years. Kamla began her work for the empowerment of the rural and urban poor in 1972, with a voluntary organization in Rajasthan, India. From 1976 to 2001, she worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

of the UN. Her work with FAO's Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development was focused on supporting innovative NGO initiatives for the development and empowerment of marginalized people, especially women, in Southeast Asia and South Asia. She presently works with SANGAT (South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers) as an advisor; with JAGORI, Women's Resource and Training Centre as an active member and with SAHR (South Asians for Human Rights) as a Bureau Member. She is also co-chair of the worldwide network Peace Women across the Globe. She is a founder and/or member of several women's groups and voluntary organizations and has written extensively on gender, women's empowerment, participatory and sustainable development, participatory training, media and communication.

### Meet Mariama Williams

Mariama Williams, Ph.D., is a Senior Fellow with the South Centre, based in Geneva, Switzerland. She is also a Research Associate with the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) and a director of the Institute of Law and



Economics, Jamaica. Her current research areas are the financial crisis and the global economy and climate change financing. Since 2009 she also worked as a consultant and trainer on gender and climate change (finance) with the Global Gender and Climate Alliance. For over seven years, Dr. Williams was a consultant adviser on gender and international trade to the Commonwealth Secretariat, London. She is also a member of the International Working Group on Gender, Macroeconomics and International Trade (IWG-GEM). Dr. Williams was a member of the WTO Director General's Advisory Council (2004-2005), a resource person to the Commonwealth Business Women's Network (London) and past member of the board of the Association for Women's Rights and Development (AWID, 2002-2004) and past member of both the Board of the Centre of Concern, Washington, D.C. and the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Civil Society Advisory Committee.

## Meet Bhumika Jhamb



Bhumika holds a Masters Degree in Community Resource Management and Extension from Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi. Currently, she is also pursuing Ph.D. from Delhi University. She joined CBGA in February 2007. As a Programme Officer, she has lead responsibilities for media advocacy, pre-budget advocacy with the Union Government and research on gender

budgeting. She regularly contributes to journals and media on issues relating to gender budgeting and other policies. She has also been regularly conducting trainings on gender budgeting of representatives of Civil Society Organisations and also of the policy makers along with the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Last year, she conducted an in-depth assessment of the budgets allocated by the states for implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Currently, she is engaged in a detailed study of the gender budgeting methodology of the Union and State governments of India.



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