



ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

2 EMBODY GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY WHILE PROMOTING WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Civil Society Organizations are effective as development actors when they promote and practise development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.



Photo: Rachel Warden/KAIROS

Women of Courage KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

KAIROS unites 11 Canadian churches and religious organizations in faithful action for justice.

CHALLENGE

As an ecumenical organization, KAIROS has a long history of working with and accompanying the most marginalized populations, including women, in the global South and in Canada. While women around the world are faced with many injustices, they can be agents of change when given the opportunity to speak out and be heard. This is particularly true around issues of human rights and peace. KAIROS and its partners wanted to change the perception of women as simply victims and show instead that women can be a catalyst and inspiration for defending human rights and bringing about peace.



RESPONSE



In 2010, KAIROS organized a delegation to Colombia made up of southern partners and Canadians, including First Nations and migrant women. The delegation sought to support women rights defenders in Colombia and to create a forum of knowledge sharing. The mission became the spark that launched Women of Courage — a program to build alliances between generations and across borders between women's rights defenders.

The program includes education, partnership, research and advocacy and unites diverse partners who are working on the defense and promotion of women's rights, often in contexts of prolonged conflict and extensive poverty. Educational tours of women human rights defenders to Canada are an important component of this. Living Courage tours in October 2011 and June 2012 brought together partners from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines, Colombia and the Occupied Palestinian Territories with Indigenous and migrant women in Canada. An emphasis was placed on mutual learning between women from the North and the South through public events, round tables and workshops.

KAIROS and its partners also produced research that focused on how women's organizations are using human rights instruments, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peace-building. When possible within the tours, KAIROS and its southern partners presented recommendations to the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Senate including: the effective and immediate implementation of Canada's Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; ending impunity related to gender violence and conflict; and increasing financial and political support to community-based human rights education and training for women.

LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

Both Living Courage tours crossed Canada, reaching diverse audiences and increasing awareness about the work of women human rights defenders. Profound and lasting connections were made between global partners, First Nations and migrant women in Canada. Recommendations were brought to the Canadian public and government. The level of participation, energy and interest in the public events was a reflection of the local organizing committees, which were diverse and inclusive. Visits to First Nations communities were an integral part of the tour, building South-North relationships and helping partners to understand the conditions and human rights violations faced by Indigenous communities in Canada, a side of Canada rarely seen by visitors.



NEXT STEPS



The results and impact of these tours will shape the ongoing work of the KAIROS Women of Courage program. In March 2013, a Canadian church leaders' delegation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo is planned to increase the visibility of gender violence on the lives of women in the DRC, to support partners working in this context, and to increase the capacity of the churches in Canada to respond. For the Women of Courage program a key unifying factor for partners in both Canada and the global South is ending the impunity that exists in the area of gender violence and human rights violations of women. KAIROS will work with partners in addressing this goal through education, research, and advocacy.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
<http://www.kairoscanada.org>

Go here for more examples of how Canadian civil society is improving its development practice: <http://www.ccic.ca/IP-case-studies.php>