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STRENGTHENINGresistance

CONFRONTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND HIV/AIDS

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Center for Women's Global Leadership

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PREFace

The Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) is pleased to publish this booklet as part of its ongoing efforts to promote international discussion of strategic issues regarding women, violence and human rights. Over the past decade, it has become clear that the HIV/AIDS crisis poses particular challenges for women, and a number of actors have called upon organizations involved in the global women's movement to respond more vigorously to it. Further, violence against women has now been recognized by many as both a cause and a consequence of women becoming infected with HIV that must be addressed to effectively respond to the global AIDS crisis. It is in this context that CWGL decided to work on topics involving the intersection of violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

As an organization that has worked since its inception for a feminist and gender-conscious understanding of human rights, particularly in the area of violence against women, this seemed like the place where we could best contribute to women's advocacy in the context of HIV/AIDS. In order to determine what we could add to the work on women and HIV that was already taking place, we organized two day-long strategic conversations in 2004 on the intersection of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS with organizations working on one or both of these issues.

Rather than initiating a separate program on this topic, we sought to weave it into our existing work. In particular, CWGL took up the theme of Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS as a major focus of the 2004 and 2005 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign. Since CWGL initiated the 16 Days of Activism campaign in 1991, we have coordinated information and communication-sharing around a broad theme for the campaign every year, and have provided a Take Action Kit, an International Calendar of Activities and other resources for local action around these globally-coordinated dates. The 16 Days campaign has provided an opportunity to

make a range of women's human rights concerns more visible and to bring attention to the intersection of violence against women with specific events, such as the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1998, or the UN World Conference Against Racism in 2001. However, in focusing on gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS for two years, we made a more explicit commitment to raising the profile of this issue and to providing information, strategies and resources for groups that wanted to address it. CWGL has also been a co-convenor with the World Health Organization of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS task force on Violence Against Women. The task force utilized the 16 Days campaign to enhance discussion of the intersection of violence against women and HIV/AIDS within the UN, and UNAIDS provided resources for this publication as part of the task force's work.

Like so many issues facing women, addressing the intersection of violence against women and HIV/AIDS effectively requires moving from rhetoric to the development of strategies and policies that will concretely defend women's human rights and provide redress for violations. This publication therefore seeks to make these issues concrete by highlighting innovative advocacy aimed at both awareness-raising and policy changes. Some of the case studies presented were part of the 16 Days campaign, while others were initiated in other contexts, but all provide ideas that could be promoted by those participating in future 16 Days campaigns as well as in other settings. We hope that this report will contribute both to deepening the discussion of the critical points of intersection and sparking ideas about strategies that can be used more widely to advance work on these issues and to help bring an end to both violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

Charlotte Bunch, Executive Director
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INTROduction



Breakthrough and Ajun Chandramohan Bali (Director)

An image from the music video "Maati" by Breakthrough, a human rights organization based in the USA and India. The video is part of the "What Kind of Man Are You?" campaign that raises the issue of husbands transmitting HIV to their wives.

Around the world, women are confronting the twin crises of violence and HIV/AIDS in their homes, in the streets, in health clinics, in their workplaces and in the halls of government. Some struggle on a daily basis as survivors of violence, as women who are HIV positive, as caregivers in families or communities immediately affected by both HIV and violence. Some are women's rights, human rights or HIV/AIDS activists who are demanding that governments, service providers and allies in various political movements address these rights and health-related emergencies. And some are providing legal, health or other kinds of support for women grappling with the ramifications of these global realities.

While these groups are not mutually exclusive, their attention is well-timed: women are facing a catastrophic assault on their bodies, rights and health as a result of

the prevalence of both HIV and the unrelenting omnipresence of violence against women on a global level. Each constitutes a crisis on its own. Yet, in the lives of thousands if not millions of women, these crises are not separable; they are fundamentally linked, as one exacerbates the other and in a circular way results in injury, poor health or death, discrimination, stigma, fear and a range of human rights abuses.

The analysis that follows explores the points of intersection of these pandemics, both of which are health-related but also deeply socially constructed.¹ Neither is solely biological; both are informed by social attitudes about gender and roles of men and women in societies. As much as both HIV/AIDS and violence against women are about physiology, epidemiology and bodies, they are also about political will, governmental accountability, resource allocation, and for the purposes of this analysis, about women's creative activism. On a global level, women have begun to demand that these phenomena