

hivos international



Motions pictures present a mirror image

After her husband is violently abducted during their wedding, Ahlaam suffers a breakdown and is institutionalised. The institution is destroyed in a bomb attack, and Ahlaam is left to fend for herself on the street, at the mercy of rapists and abusers. Her family searches for her.

The above is a capsule account of the Iraqi motion picture Ahlaam. The production introduces viewers to the consequences of war for ordinary citizens in Iraq. People like themselves. 'Motion pictures appeal to the viewers' sense of recognition and identification,' explains Gertrude Flentge, Hivos' arts and culture programme officer for Asia and Latin America. 'This makes cinema perfect for conveying a message and helps the Dutch public become aware of the situation in developing countries. The medium also has a very broad appeal and range.' Hivos also promotes awareness and freedom of expression by supporting productions that address themes such as human rights or gender.

Encouragement

'In addition to productions, we support film festivals, distribution initiatives and training for film makers,' reports Paul van Paaschen.

'In the Netherlands and in the South.'

The arts and culture programme manager also mentions two new film funds; one for Southern Africa (www.sithengi.co.za) and the other for Central America (www.cinergia.org). Hivos helped develop both of them.

The whole story

Paul van Paaschen: 'Film makers in developing countries have trouble obtaining film grants. A fund such as Cinergia in Costa Rica addresses this need by supporting producers, also during pre-production, for example by helping with their storyline and budget. Our efforts promote the motion picture industry in developing countries.' The Hivos-NCDO culture fund then enables these films to be screened in the Netherlands.

SCENE FROM AHLAAM BY IRAQI CINEMA DIRECTOR MOHAMED AL-DARADJI (28). HE MADE THIS COMPELLING MOTION PICTURE ABOUT HIS HOMETOWN WITH SUPPORT FROM HIVOS AND THE HUBERT BALS FUND.

HIVOS AND CINEMA

Hivos supports various film projects and events. Outside the Netherlands:

- the Amakula Kampala International Film Festival, from May 4 through 14 in Uganda (www.amakula.com)
- the international documentary festival Encuentros del Otro Cine, from May 4 through 19 in Ecuador (www.cinememoria.org)
- the Jakarta International Film Festival, from December 8 through 16 in Indonesia (www.jiffest.org)
- the African film school Imagine in Burkina Faso (www.imagine.bf)
- the Film Resource Unit in South Africa (www.fru.co.za).

In the Netherlands they include:

- the International Film Festival Rotterdam (www.iffir.nl)
- the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (www.idfa.nl)
- the Latin America Film Festival, from May 3 through 10 (www.laff.nl)
- the Movies that Matter Film Festival (www.amnesty.nl/filmfestival)

CIRCUMCISION: NOT SACROSANCT'

'Millions of women and girls in Kenya suffer for the sake of "cultural tradition". This must stop,' insists Dolphine Okech, executive director and programme coordinator of the Kenya Female Advisory Organization (KEFEADO). Like Hivos, KEFEADO values culture. But this does not mean that all traditional customs and cultural beliefs need to be cherished. Some practices even violate human rights, such as women's circumcision. KEFEADO is fighting this tradition from Kisumu, Kenya. The Hivos partner focuses primarily on the rural areas, where vaginal mutilation is the most prevalent.

Estimates suggest that fifty percent of the women in Kenya is circumcised. Dolphine Okech: 'Virtually nothing about vaginal mutilation appears in the Kenyan constitution. We lobby for improved regulations among local authorities, politicians and community leaders.' The organization suggests alternative, less harmful rituals for communities and engages in dialogue with the people. 'We review the origin of women's circumcision and explain that it is a social and historical product, rather than a religious one. And we mention that this ritual arises from the belief that men and women are unequal.'

KEFEADO uses innovative means, such as theatre performances, to activate this dialogue. Dolphine Okech: 'We are managing to change the general mindset. You cannot eliminate inequality between men and women without promoting discussion about the standards and values underlying this situation.'

AFRICA DAY: BEYOND THE PROMISES

At the UN Millennium summit and Live 8 concerts last year several fine promises were made. How will these promises carry over into specific agreements and results? That was the main question this year on Africa Day in The Hague, the seat of the Dutch government, on April 22. The experts discussing the matter included Minister of Development Cooperation Agnes van Ardenne and HIV/Aids campaign coordinator Clementine Dehwe of the coordinating trade union organisation Global Unions. Africa Day is an annual event of the Evert Vermeer Stichting and is dedicated to Africa and development cooperation. It offers a forum for discussion, a platform for exchanging experiences and the perfect opportunity for establishing new contacts. Many NGOs contributed this year. Hivos teamed up with NiZA to organize debates about democratisation and elections in Zambia. Together with STOP AIDS NOW! Hivos conducted discussions about gender, human rights, sexuality and AIDS. Various Hivos partners attended, including Bishop Paul Musus of Oasis Forum in Zambia and Dolphine Okech from KEFEADO in Kenya.

For more information, see: www.afrikadag.nl

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE CHANGES LATIN AMERICAN RURAL SECTOR

The mangrove trees and bushes along the coast of Ecuador determine the quality of life and fertility of the area. Inadequate knowledge of land preservation is endangering this eco-system. However, Hivos partner C-Condem works together with the communities in the area on sharing their nature preservation experience through ICT. This is helping the mangroves recover slowly. This local knowledge exchange initiative materialized during the workshops held in Ecuador from March 16 through 22. Twenty-five organizations from Latin America and the Caribbean shared their experiences and ideas on how to implement ICTs and how to share knowledge within and between their organisations. Hivos organized these South-South Exchange workshops in conjunction with the Ecuadorian Agencia Latinoamericana de Información (ALAI). The organizers received support from IICD (Netherlands) and IDRC (Canada). All workshop participants were from the rural development sector. 'This enabled us to present cases that everybody recognized,' explains Hivos ICT, Media & Knowledge Sharing programme manager Paul Maassen. 'Visits to rural development projects, such as the one in the Ecuadorian mangrove area, helped bring the workshops to life. The knowledge exchange methods, however, will benefit all types of institutions.' Martin Salvador Cuadra, of the Nicaraguan Servicio de Información Mesoamericana sobre Agricultura Sostenible (SIMAS), reminisces: 'talking to people from other cultures about rural development problems and solutions was inspiring. We have noticed that they embrace the same values, such as solidarity, justice and respect for traditional agriculture and indigenous knowledge. At and as a result of the workshops, SIMAS has already entered various partnerships.'

For more information, see: www.hivos.nl

CONTEXT SHAPES THE PORTAL

The phenomenon is rare in Southeast Europe: an independent and honest information medium. But OneWorld SEE has been online since April 4. This website gathers information from various NGOs about the most important social trends in Southeast Europe. The page figures on the international OneWorld network: the leading independent global civil society news and information centre on the Internet. The OneWorld Platform for the South East Europe (OWPSEE) Foundation produces OneWorld SEE from its head office in the Macedonian capital of Skopje. Macedonia is typical of a country where privatisation and sponsoring have given business and political interests a major impact on the content of many media. OWPSEE started as a Hivos and Unimondo (OneWorld Italy) project but has since evolved into an independent Hivos partner. In addition to promoting honest information sources through OneWorld SEE, NGOs in Southeast Europe use the increasingly popular website to raise public awareness about their operations. Their Internet knowledge and access is often too limited for them to create or update Internet pages on their own. 'Encouraging a dialogue between NGOs is important but will come later' mentions Dejan Georgievski, executive editor of OneWorld SEE. 'Making them visible is the first priority.'

For more information, see:
www.oneworldsee.org

ORGANIC ALTERNATIVE TO POVERTY AT BIOFACH 2006

Organic farming has become a professional industry. It is now the method par excellence for farmers to escape poverty without abandoning their traditional production methods. This enables them to preserve much of their cultural identity. Hivos partners reached this conclusion last February during their visit to BioFach, a trade fair for organic products held each year at Nuremberg. The partners included the National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU). 'Once again this year, the fair appeared to attract more firms sincerely interested in African products and with the resources to import them,' reports Ruth Nabagereka, international marketing officer for NOGAMU. She was one of the 37,000 visitors from 116 nations exploring the stands of over 2,000 exhibitors. 'The size and international presence of BioFach illustrate the current state of the sector,' she explains. 'Attending the fair helps NOGAMU promote Ugandan products and gauge our own professionalism. Each year we are getting better at establishing business contacts for NOGAMU members. BioFach also provides excellent opportunities for market research. We now know, for example, that buyers would appreciate a new, more elaborate NOGAMU website. We will accelerate completion of the one already under development. The page will be online within two months.'

In 2001 NOGAMU was established as an umbrella organization for dozens of people in Ugandan agriculture – from producers to merchants. This Hivos partner promotes and coordinates development, network formation and management of sustainable organic farming in Uganda.

For additional information, see: www.nogamu.org and www.biofach.com

ART EAST APPRECIATED AT VENICE BIENNALE

The international press at the Venice Biennale agreed wholeheartedly that the Central Asian art exhibit was one of the most fascinating country presentations at this major contemporary art exhibition. The Central Asian exhibit included Muratbek Djoumaliev and Gulnara Kasmaliev's Trans Siberian Amazons video installation, featuring several television screens positioned among dozens of bags stuffed to capacity. On the screens, the artists broadcast scenes of a typical but internationally unknown practice in their country: trading by 'suitcase peddlers'. After the fall of communism, Kyrgyzstan had to adapt to the free market. The economy plummeted, local industry was paralysed, and retail stocks of important commodities dwindled. People travelled to neighbouring countries such as China to purchase these types of items, and sold the contents of their stuffed suitcases and bags in

their home country. The artist couple coordinates the Kyrgyzstan artists' organisation Art East. Hivos supports Art East, in part because they combine their local focus with an open, international outlook. This is manifested in their works, such as Trans Siberian Amazons, and by their efforts to promote contemporary visual art in Kyrgyzstan through Art East. Art East organises exhibits, seminars and exchanges with artists from other countries and is thus a dynamic force in promoting contemporary art in Central Asia and constructs an international art network.

For more information, see: www.universes-in-universe.de/car/venezia/bien51/deu/central-asia/img-10.htm

Violent police response to women's protest in Iran



The police harshly cut down a peaceful gathering of about one thousand women in the Iranian capital of Teheran. This happened on March 8, International Women's Day, when the broad coalition of women's groups staged a demonstration for improved rights in Iran. Inequality between men and women is firmly embedded in laws and regulations in this Islamic country.

The gathering which started at 4:00 pm, and was scheduled to last one hour, was charged by security forces shortly after it began, who relentlessly beat the protesters in an effort to disperse the group. (report from an eye-witness)

Leila Mouri of Hivos partner Women's Association of Iran (WAI) reports that women in Iran suffer systematic discrimination. 'Under the Iranian constitution, the man is the head of the household. Any married woman who wants to work needs to obtain permission from her husband first. Women who divorce lose custody of their children.' Iranian women experience such forms of oppression daily. WAI is trying to achieve change through workshops informing women about their rights. 'Many women are unaware of the few rights they do have,' explains Leila Mouri.

At 4:20 the final statement of the sit-in was read, during which the security forces dumped cans of garbage on the heads of women who were seated in an effort to prevent easy dispersal. The security forces then charged the group and began beating the protesters.

Hivos and WAI have launched a project to provide women all over the country with important information and have set up websites for this purpose in several provinces. 'The websites feature news bulletins, background articles and reports,' explains Leila Mouri. 'And they condemn the police intervention on March 8.' Hivos was also horrified and took several actions, including publishing an eye-witness report on www.hivos.nl and sending it to international women's organisations. Hivos has also asked the Dutch ministers of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, as well as the parliamentary committee of Foreign Affairs, to condemn this act of violence.

The security forces were estimated at over one hundred, with busloads being added during the course of the protest. All carried batons and the women were repeatedly told by the security forces as they administered beatings that they had orders to beat the protesters.

In Iran Hivos supports various organisations dedicated to democracy and human rights, gender, women and development and ICT and new media. The partners operate under difficult conditions. Hivos hopes to alert the international community to the situation in Iran, as well as the situation for civil society in that country.

To achieve this, Hivos supports public awareness campaigns, such as debates and lectures. Additionally, Hivos aims to strengthen contacts and partnerships between NGOs and activists in and outside Iran by promoting exchanges and participation of Iranians at international conferences.

Hivos is a development organisation which stands for emancipation, democratisation and poverty alleviation in developing countries. For this purpose financial and political support is given to more than 750 local private organisations in 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and South-East Europe. Their operations concern economics, culture and the arts, human rights and Aids, sustainable development and gender, women and development: the five policy spearheads of Hivos. Part of the work has been decentralised to four regional offices in Zimbabwe, India, Indonesia and Costa Rica. They take care of an important part of the contacts with partner organisations.

Alliance 2015
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