

Hivos *international*



HIVOS LAUNCHES KNOWLEDGE PROGRAMME

Development organizations encounter complex problems worldwide. The rise of fundamentalist movements is a case in point. Hivos understands that knowledge is essential to deal with this type of problem and has therefore launched the Knowledge Programme.

This programme enables Hivos to map its own knowledge and that of its partners. It also teams up with universities and think tanks – in part to generate new insights. At this time Hivos is working closely with the Institute of Social Studies (ISS, The Hague), the University for Humanist Studies (Utrecht) and the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS, Bangalore). ‘The objective of our new programme is to gather diverse types of knowledge – from academic theories to everyday experiences of partners – to devise new solutions,’ explains Josine Stremmelaar,

Knowledge Programme coordinator. Hivos intends for these solutions to enhance development strategies. Stremmelaar: ‘This will enable partners to lobby and form coalitions more effectively.’ The knowledge gathered is not to be restricted to Hivos and partners. Other civil society organizations are welcome to benefit, as are policy makers. Knowledge is subdivided into categories such as ‘civil society building’, ‘freedom of expression’ and ‘pluralism & fundamentalism’. It is presented in many different formats: from articles, policy documents and a website, to seminars, summer courses and training sessions.

Would you like to learn more about the Knowledge Programme? E-mail Josine Stremmelaar: j.stremmelaar@hivos.nl

Note: if your organization has interesting projects or activities to share with other Hivos partners, please contact Kathelijn Fenger at Hivos: k.fenger@hivos.nl

LIES MARCOES:

‘I HAVE A LOT TO GIVE BACK’

Hivos works with countless experts and benefits greatly from their knowledge and experience. Lies Marcoes-Natsir from Indonesia is an important contact regarding women’s rights.

This activist and scholar was the first to connect feminism and Islam in her country. She is now Senior Programme Officer for the Asia Foundation’s ‘Islam & Civil Society Programme’ in Aceh, a province on the Indonesian coast. ‘Twenty years ago Hivos helped me when I was just getting started as an activist. The organization asked me to conduct a training session on gender for its partner Kalyanamitra, a group of feminists known as radical in Indonesia. They were so impressed that they invited me to join Kalyanamitra. I was a member for years.’ Marcoes is still in touch with Hivos. In fact, she is advising HIV/AIDS partner PKBI about a gender programme. And in September she came to the Hivos head office to evaluate another Hivos partner: GAYa Nusantara, an organization dedicated to promoting gay rights in Indonesia. ‘I do this on my days off, independently from the Asia Foundation,’ says Marcoes. ‘I love this work. I learn from organizations such as GAYa Nusantara – from their approach and their methods. I apply these lessons in practice with the Asia Foundation. And I have a lot of knowledge to give back to them, thanks to my years of experience with human rights.’



» Lies Marcoes

For additional information, see the websites of Asia Foundation (www.asiafoundation.org), PKBI (www.pkbi.or.id) and GAYa Nusantara (www.gayanusantara.org).

HIVOS INCREASES AID TO IRAQ

Hivos plans to expand its direct aid to civil society organizations in Iraq. This is provided that safety conditions in the country are adequate. Since becoming active in Iraq in 2004, Hivos has extended direct support to only a few partners. One is the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) in Baghdad.

In the future Hivos will continue offering indirect support as well, in part via the Dutch peace movement IKV Pax Christi. Hivos will also keep working with other organizations to sustain interest in Iraq – both among the Dutch public and with the Dutch government and the European authorities. Members of this partnership network include the development aid organization Cordaid, the Dutch refugee service Stichting Vluchteling, IKV Pax Christi and Amnesty International. Hivos teamed up with the latter two to invite five Iraqi experts to the Netherlands and Belgium. In the second week of September these visitors attended expert meetings and travelled to The Hague and Brussels to lobby there. They also participated in Critical Voices from Iraq, a public debate in Amsterdam. Here, experts including the feminist Hanaa Edwar (see box) discussed their country's problems and prospects.

Footage from and about Critical Voices from Iraq appears on: www.youtube.com/user/sthivos

HANAA EDWAR, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AL-AMAL WOMEN'S MOVEMENT:

'The Iraqi people are struggling to survive. Even in these circumstances, though, they have lost neither their hope nor their vigour. Our efforts should target two groups: women and youth. They should be able to express themselves and to realize their potential. Like men, women should have the opportunity to take part in society and politics. Thus far, the international community has invested primarily in intervention, security and material supplies, such as arms. Too little has been spent on education – on projects conducive to achieving a new outlook and a mindset that revolves around peace, human rights and democracy. Because real change will need to come from within. In addition, political pressure should be applied to the countries around Iraq, such as Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The West needs to understand that these countries do not want stability to be restored in Iraq for fear of losing power. This problem is more serious than the present focus of Western media – the division between Iraqi population groups.'

WORKSHOP: TOTAL INTERNET CENSORSHIP IS IMPOSSIBLE



Websites reflecting a political stand that disappear. Sensitive historical information that becomes untraceable. These are examples of Internet censorship. In late September Hivos organized a workshop about this subject during Picnic, the international multimedia event in Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands.

The workshop focused mainly on China. However, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus were covered as well. Speakers discussed freedom of the online press in their country. Even though the Internet is subject to harsh censorship in some countries, it offers opportunities as well. The worldwide web enables Tunisian bloggers to launch virtual demonstrations against their government. Nor is censorship that simple. Posting the same content on different internet pages (known as 'mirroring') allows information to remain online if a page is removed. The

overall conclusion was that total censorship is impossible. The Internet is simply too vast to block all unwanted information. In addition, technological tricks for avoiding censorship are infinite.

If you would like additional information about Picnic, go to www.picnicnetwork.org. For additional information about the Hivos workshop on online censorship and/or the new information leaflet about the Hivos ICT & Media programme, send an e-mail to sim@hivos.nl



HIVOS LAUNCHES A DISCUSSION ABOUT BANS ON ABORTION

Suppose a girl becomes pregnant by accident. Can she get an abortion? In several countries the procedure is illegal. Hivos believes that safe abortions should be universally available and works with organizations dedicated to this cause. Hoping to encourage people to think about the issue, Hivos helped organize a youth debate about abortion in late September.

In the Dutch city of Utrecht sixty young adults listened to girls their age who had become pregnant by accident. The speakers talked about their choice between terminating their pregnancy and having a baby. Two young people from Kenya and Pakistan described the situation of abortion in their country. Women with unwanted pregnancies resort to illegal and extremely dangerous termination methods. The sixty, largely Dutch, young adults debated provocative statements, such as: 'nobody should be ashamed of having an abortion' and 'adoption is preferable to abortion'. They concluded by formulating

recommendations for the Dutch minister of Development Cooperation, who attended the international Global Safe Abortion Conference in London a few weeks later.

The abortion debate in Utrecht was organized by MY BODY, Choice, Youth Incentives, Rutgers Nisso group, Share-net, Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights and Hivos. Would you like additional information, or do you plan to organize a similar debate? For information and tips, mail: drag@hivos.nl

HIVOS ADVISES UN COMMISSION

Would they attend a meeting of an independent expert group in September, to advise the UN Commission on the Status of Women in preparing their 2008 assembly? Organizers of this meeting sent such invitations to fourteen experts, including five Hivos partners and Ireen Dubel, manager of the Hivos Gender, Women & Development programme.

Dubel attributed the invitation from the UN to Hivos' international reputation. Over the past two decades, Hivos has established lasting relationships with several women's organizations and is also known internationally for its expertise on emancipation. In addition, Hivos received favourable mention in an otherwise critical report issued by the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID). In 2005 this Hivos partner concluded based on independent research that donor organizations are allocating progressively less funding toward emancipation. Hivos was among the few exceptions. Based in part on the AWID report, the UN Commission on the Status of Women put funding on the agenda of its 2008 assembly. More specifically: opportunities and problems concerning funding toward emancipation. 'Never before has this subject figured explicitly on the UN commission's agenda,' explained Dubel. 'And this in a period that the UN organization is undergoing

reforms and welcomes new ideas!' Those attending the preparatory expert meeting advised the commission to promote two paths of investments. On the one hand, donors should mainstream women's rights by addressing the issue in all their funding programmes. On the other hand, they should treat emancipation as a separate field. This means that they should support specific emancipation projects and organizations. 'This practice is becoming more infrequent,' observed Dubel. 'Still, both paths need to be pursued to improve the position of women and girls.'

Would you like to find out more about the UN expert meeting Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, held in Norway from 4 to 7 September. See www.un.org/womenwatch/daw under 'Expert Group Meetings'. Or send an e-mail to: drag@hivos.nl

HIVOS PARTNER WANTS KAZAKHSTAN TO BE GMO-FREE

'Nobody worries about genetically modified organisms in Kazakhstan – except the Foundation of Integration of Ecological Culture (FIEC), a new non-governmental organization.'

Marieke Kragten, programme officer for the Hivos Sustainable Production in Central Asia department continues. 'Hivos provides FIEC with financial and other support. We have introduced FIEC to a vast network of organizations that deal with issues concerning genetically modified crops. FIEC is dedicated to eliminating GMOs from Kazakhstan. This may not be feasible, but the effort is certainly worthwhile. Kazakhstan is forging ahead in its development. Raising awareness about GMOs at this stage is especially important, as farmers want to experiment with

GMOs for growing wheat. FIEC could lobby for GMO-free zones. This goal is realistic. The organization is gradually making progress. Until recently, nobody listened to the FIEC. Now the organization is in contact with the ministries of Agriculture and Health and the consumers' league in Kazakhstan. Parliament has passed a law requiring baby food manufacturers to indicate on the packaging whether their products are made with GMOs. The FIEC is suing Nestlé for failing to comply with this law. I don't know whether the FIEC stands a chance against such a multinational, but the case has generated a lot of publicity. As a consequence, interest in GMOs in Kazakhstan is growing.'

To learn more about the struggle of Hivos partner FIEC for a GMO-free Kazakhstan, e-mail sed@hivos.nl

SUCCESSFUL BIODIVERSITY FUND CONFERENCE

***Social and Environmental Responsibility in Progress* was the title of the conference that the Biodiversity Fund of Hivos and Oxfam The Netherlands organized on 1 November. The event was a joint effort between the fund, the nature preservation organization IUCN and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conference in The Hague addressed the role of quality control systems such as 'organic' and 'fair trade' in poverty eradication, biodiversity preservation and corporate performance.**

'The conference was a big success,' reports Carol Gribnau, the Hivos officer responsible for the Biodiversity Fund. 'Everybody involved with the subject attended: Hivos partners, environmental organizations, scientists, people from corporate industry, Dutch government representatives. We gave each other positive reinforcement about our course of action. But challenges lie ahead as well. Small producers continue to have difficulty complying with quality and environmental standards. We need to accommodate partner organizations working with small farmers in developing

countries in this respect.' One of these organizations is CRECER, which trains and advises farmers' organizations from Guatemala. Ileana Cordón represented this Hivos partner at the conference. 'This was a wonderful opportunity to speak out on behalf of small producers. It was also nice to see that all parties present are indeed dedicated to social entrepreneurship. I hope that Hivos will continue investing in projects such as those of CRECER, so that small producers may continue to participate in the global market.'

If you would like to know more about the Biodiversity Fund and the conference, go to www.hivos.nl/biodiversityfund. From mid-December a report of the conference will be featured on www.hivos.nl/english



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 800 local private organisations in 30 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The seven policy spearheads of Hivos are financial services and enterprise developments; socially and ecologically sustainable production; human rights and democratisation; HIV/Aids; arts and culture; gender, women and development; ICT, media and knowledge sharing. 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.

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