

Rights Action

www.rightsaction.org • June 2005

RELENTLESS WORK & STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN & ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING & BALANCE

Thank-you for reading this newsletter. Thank-you for being a new or long-term financial supporter of Rights Action.

It is worth repeating: like our community-based partner groups in Chiapas, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti and elsewhere, Rights Action is involved in long, long, long-term work, generational work, to transform economic, political and legal systems, at the local to global levels, so as to create a just global human order that lives in harmony and balance with the natural environment and animal life.

From one newsletter to the next, it is sometimes hard to see “progress”, or to prove that global equality, justice and balance are soon to arrive.

So how do we go about our work? Day in—month out, year in—decade out, we find and support good people and their grassroots projects, one community at a time, one struggle at a time. This newsletter summarizes more of this amazing, creative and courageous work:

- In Guatemala, women and girls challenge the structures of machismo and societal break-down, and the resultant and endemic violence against women and girls.
- In Haiti, Konpay plays a pivotal role locating and supporting grassroots organizations across the beleaguered country of courageous people carrying out a wide range of projects.
- In Honduras, we condemn the recent political killings of courageous leaders and the attempted killing of a long-term friend of Rights Action. We are honored to support and work with Hondurans who—despite the obvious risks—continue to demand justice and fight for locally-controlled and environmentally-sound development models.

Thank-you for your financial support and trust. Please send us your suggestions, questions, inspirations,

Let us know if you would like to come to Central America on an educational delegation or if you would like to establish long-term community-to-community relations with any of our partner organizations in the region.

We dedicate this newsletter to Edickson Roberto Lemus, killed May 24 in Honduras.

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS:

Make checks payable to “Rights Action” and mail to either our Canadian or US office.

UNITED STATES

Rights Action
1830 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20009
202-783-1123
info@rightsaction.org

CANADA

Rights Action
Box 73527, 509 St. Clair Ave W.
Toronto ON, M6C-1C0
416-654-2074
info@rightsaction.org

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HAITI PROGRAM

**KONPAY: Working Together for Haiti,
Konbit Pou Ayiti**

Confronted with on-going repression, exploitation and poverty, Konpay has an integral vision of Haiti's needs. It supports community-based efforts across the country. We can provide institutional donors with a complete proposal and budget for Konpay's program.

KONPAY Partner Groups

KOPADIM School: Martissant is a poor, exploited area of Port-au-Prince. Residents lack sewage systems, water, transportation, schools, health clinics, etc. Based on community-agreed priority needs, KOPADIM parents convinced teachers living in the zone to teach without salaries and get the school up and running. KONPAY has financial support for salaries until July, ... and school enrollment is growing.

CFAJ, Center for Artistic Training of Jacmel: is an artist-directed cooperative that trains "associate artists" who, in turn, train and tutor impoverished children. CFAJ's program also includes a modest meal for the children.

Fann Vanyan Leyogan, Valiant Women of Leogane: Organized ten years ago, the group is situated in a very poor community with no water, electricity, sewers, or roads. The women have undertaken projects that include community safety patrols, health programs, canalization for irrigation, and education programs ranging from HIV/AIDS to civics. Their priority is to build a health clinic in Petite Riviere de Leogane.

KOFAVIV, The Women's Commission of Victims for Victims, Port-au-Prince: Women survivor of abuse and oppression in the Port-au-Prince barrios created the Women's Commission of Victims for Victims. As "community human rights agents," they walk violent front lines, providing emergency assistance, such as emergency funds, safe housing, medicine, and education/training, for female victims of gender violence.

GCFV, Support Group for Women Victims: Founded in 1995, the GCFV provides training, technical assistance and other support to women victims' groups in Port-au-Prince. GCFV provides a training seminar "Violence Against Women."

MEPE, Youth Movement for the Protection of the Environment, Cyvadier: MEPE is a group of over 150 children from Cyvadier, a rural village outside Jacmel, in south-east Haiti. Working with a local agronomist, the students meet weekly to learn about tree planting, clean water sources, and soil conservation. MEPE is currently planning a tree-planting project to reinforce the three major water sources for the village of Cyvadier, and two major sources for a village to the east, Ti Mouillage.

CTH, Confederation of Haitian Workers Women's Commission: The Women's Commission of the Confederation of Haitian Workers manages a small school in Port-au-Prince where women teach women trades traditionally reserved for men in Haitian society. Carpenters, plumbers, electricians and others work with unemployed women, or those working in prostitution, to offer alternative skills for employment.

SOPUDEP, Computer Lab addition to school, Petionville: SOPUDEP, the Organization for the Socio-Economic Development of Petionville, runs a school and adult education programs in the Port-au-Prince suburb Petionville. SOPUDEP wants to expand the services offered by building a computer lab and offering computer and internet literacy courses.

Father Jean Marie Vincent Memorial Reforestation Center, Gros Morne: Father Vincent Center is in its 7th year of successful tree planting, reforestation, and community environmental education. Successes include one million trees planted, a 200,000 tree forest in Grepin, and a study of the entire watershed of the three rivers that intersect around the village of Gros Morne.

GUATEMALA: PROGRAM AREA

WOMEN: Victims of Violence, Working to Eradicate Gender Violence

Mixed in with the injustices and inequalities characteristic of Guatemala's history are: domestic violence, violence against women and girls in public places, and the assassination of women and girls with horrendous signs of torture and rape. The principle causes of this violence are macho attitudes (*machismo*), which permeates society, and a culture of violence that dates back, in various forms, to the European conquest.

Rights Action funds and works with eight partner organizations to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. We can provide institutional donors a complete proposal and budget for this program area.

Tierra Viva focuses on the sexual and reproductive rights of women, and work for a non-sexist, non-racist culture.

ATI: Asociación Toto Integrado uses traditional and western medicine to address rural health problems. They also run a training program in reproductive health for indigenous women and assist survivors of violence and abuse.

AMES: Asociación de Mujeres en Solidaridad promotes integral development of women and girls with emphasis on sexual and reproductive rights, civil and labour rights and the right to live without violence. AMES runs a medical clinic in an impoverished market area and provides medical and emergency attention to victims of violence.

ASECSA: Asociación de Servicios Comunitarios de Salud works throughout the country for the right to integral health services for the rural and indigenous populations that are marginalized from the public health system.

Asociación de Mujeres Ixqik: Formed by poor rural women in the Peten, Ixqik focuses on the empowerment and strengthening the women's movement, as well as influencing policy within state institutions and civil society in relation to the rights of women and girls.

Defensoría Indígena de Las Verapaces was established in 2002 by a Maya-Achi woman in Salamá, Baja Verapaz. This legal clinic uses Mayan customary law to resolve conflicts, which include land disputes and family conflicts, many of which result in domestic violence.

Red de No Violencia, The No Violence Network is made up of five organizations—*Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres, Nuestra Voz, AMES, Mujeres Lulianas, Centro de investigación y Capacitación a Mujeres* and Hilda Morales—Ambassador of Conscience (named by Amnesty Internacional in 2004). The Network educates and challenges the National Congress to do its job with respect to gender violence and denounces violations of women's and girl's rights, as established in national and international law.

HONDURAS Program

(MORE) REPRESSION AGAINST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LEADERS

We summarize here information concerning cases of repression against Rights Action community development partner organizations. These are two among the endemic climate of repression against community development and indigenous movements in Honduras and the region. We can provide institutional donors with full proposals and budgets for the following groups.

Honduras (continued from previous page)

Attack on Gregoria Flores, OFRANEH

On May 30, 2005, Gregoria Flores, General Coordinator of OFRANEH (Organización Fraternal Negra de Honduras) and a leader of the Garífuna people, was shot in the arm in La Ceiba, north coast of Honduras. She was going, in a vehicle, to the community of Triunfo de la Cruz to collect testimonies of human rights violations to present to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission when an unknown male shot at her vehicle.

On March 25, 2005, State authorities illegally entered and searched the house of OFRANEH activist Miriam Miranda, supposedly searching for weapons. The government has not clarified this act of persecution, one of several cases of political repression against Garífuna community leaders. OFRANEH has been working to defend Garífuna communal territory from the advances of mega-tourist projects, large

landowners, and other initiatives such as PATH, the Honduras Land Administration Project, financed by the World Bank.

Targetted killing, Edickson Roberto Lemus

On May 24, in the northwestern city of El Progreso, Yoro, Edickson Roberto Lemus, regional coordinator of the CNTC (Central Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo), left a meeting and took a city bus, where an unknown individual shot Edickson 4 times, killing him immediately. Edickson was on his way to the nearby community of El Pajuiles, where the campesino group 'Renacer' (Rebirth) had suffered a violent eviction on May 19, 2005. He was also an important organizer in several communities, accompanying various campesino groups in the department of Yoro and coordinating solidarity and follow-up in other cases of repression against local community leaders.

With your support, Rights Action will continue to fund the long-term, community-controlled development work of OFRANEH, the CNTC and other community-based groups in Honduras, as well as channel emergency support funds to both OFRANEH and the CNTC to support the victims and their family members of these recent acts of repression.

RightsAction

Box 73527, 509 St. Clair Ave W.
Toronto ON, M6C-1C0



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