

Sexual Violence as International Crime

Highlights of Local Efforts, Summer 2011

A newsletter presented by the Center on Law and Globalization;
a program of the University of Illinois College of Law and the American Bar Foundation



Women's Forum (Sierra Leone) March in Freetown on International Women's Day. Learn more about WFSL below.

At The Second Hague Colloquium on Systematic Sexual Violence and Victims' Rights, our 200 participants discussed a need for ways in which individuals from various professions and locations could connect and work together to raise public awareness, advance the courts, empower victims, repair communities, intimidate perpetrators and, ultimately, prevent atrocities.

The Center on Law and Globalization aims to foster these types of interdisciplinary partnerships and stimulate exchanges on how global issues are addressed. A single approach cannot remedy the issue of systematic sexual violence and the Center believes that when rigorous independent research is applied with diplomacy, policy, activism and law, we can establish reliable tools and policies to combat these tragedies.

We hope that our newsletter, along with our LinkedIn Group and Twitter feed, will provide ways for our readers to network with and learn from each other. This Summer Issue is intended to build bridges between individuals and organizations working at the most local level and our global community. Here you will find the profiles of five leaders and champions whom are dedicated to furthering gender equality and combating sexual violence within areas of present or past conflict.

- Allison Lynch
Center on Law and Globalization
Development and Communications Associate

The Center on Law and Globalization would like to thank **Isabelle Liger**, Administrative Honor Fellow, Office of Graduate and International Legal Studies at the University of Illinois College of Law, for her contributions as **Guest Editor** of this Issue.

If you would like to contribute ideas, write or act as an editor in future issues please contact alynch@abfn.org.

Profiles in this Issue:

Justine Masika Bihamba
Vesna Nikolic Ristanovic
Rosaline MCarthy
Hala Alkarib
Renifa Madenga

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"Sexual violence against women has become part of war. It has become one

Justine Masika Bihamba

Women Synergy for Sexual Violence Victims

Name: Justine Masika Bihamba

Region: Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo

Current Position: Coordinator and Co-Founder, Women Synergy for Sexual Violence Victims (Synergy des Femmes pour les Victimes des violences Sexuelles)

Biography: Justine Masika Bihamba is from Goma, in the East DRC, and is one of the founders of a local platform for the defense of human rights, dealing especially with female victims of rape. In 2008, she won the Tulip Prize for human rights advocacy, awarded by the government of The Netherlands to human rights activists around the world. Recently, she was nominated by Women Deliver as one of the hundred most inspiring people who have delivered and advocated for the rights of girls and women.

Work in the Field: Justine won the Pax Christi Italy Prize in 2009 for the work her organization, Women Synergy for Sexual Violence Victims, has done to provide thousands of raped women with medical and psychological care, socio-economical reinserion and legal aid. The organization also raises public awareness to avoid raped women from being rejected by their family and community. Additionally, it gathers all the elements necessary for the prosecution of perpetrators by national or international courts.

To see Justine Masika Bihamba's full profile see "[Local Efforts](#)" on the CLG Website



of war's most terrible weapons. We witnessed it in Rwanda during the genocide in 1994 and we suffer from it in East Democratic Republic of Congo wars, despite all our warnings."

- Justine Masika Bihamba

Without the recognition of the rights of women and their contributions, the countries of the Horn stand no chance of development as they will remain swinging at the edge of stability, unable to reach it."

- Hala Alkarib

The issue of sexual and gender-based violence in Sierra Leone predated the war and assumed alarming proportions during the war. Even after the war, we still have the challenge of high incidence of sexual and gender based crimes. According to the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, these heinous crimes against women during the war were attributed to discrimination against women.

- Rosaline Mcarthy

Vesna Nikolic Ristanovic

Victimology Society of Serbia

Name: Vesna Nikolic Ristanovic

Region: Serbia

Current Position: Founder and Director, Victimology Society of Serbia

Website: <http://www.vds.org.rs/indexe.html>

Biography: Vesna Nikolic Ristanovic graduated from the School of Law in Belgrade in 1978. She also received a Masters Degree with her thesis "The Impact of Victim to the Phenomenon of Crime" (published in 1984) and completed her Doctoral Thesis, "Women as Victims of Crimes" (published in 1989) from the School of Law in Belgrade. Since 2004, she has been a professor of Criminology, Juvenile Delinquency, Victimology and Child Abuse at Belgrade University, Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation/Department for Prevention and Treatment of Social Disorders. She is the Founder of the Victimology Society of Serbia, was its President between 1997 and 2006, and has been its Director since 2006.

Work in the Field: The Victimology Society of Serbia (VDS) is a not-for-profit and non-governmental organization established in 1997 in Belgrade. Its mission is to unite academics and professionals who are interested in the development of victimology and protection of victims of crime, human rights violations and war regardless of their gender, religion, ethnicity and other features. The Victimology Society's work is organized around three main groups of activities: VDS info and support to victims, VDS research and education and VDS truth and reconciliation program.

To see Vesna Nikolic Ristanovic's full profile see "[Local Efforts](#)" on the CLG Website

Rosaline MCarthy

Women's Forum (Sierra Leone)

Name: Rosaline MCarthy

Region: Sierra Leone

Current Position: National Chairperson of the Women's Forum (Sierra Leone)

Additional: Principal Lecturer in Education at Freetown Teachers College

Biography: Rosaline MCarthy is an educationist by profession and a gender activist. She is a Principal Lecturer in Education at Freetown Teachers College, Kossoh Town, Sierra Leone, the National Chairperson of the Women's Forum (Sierra Leone) and a founding member of the Mano River Women's Peace Network. Rosaline holds a Masters Degree in Education from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. In addition to the research she has conducted on human rights in conflict situations, Rosaline is very active in the women's movement in Sierra Leone focusing on victims of sexual violence during the war and other vulnerable groups.



Work in the Field: The Women's Forum (Sierra Leone) was founded in 1994 in response to the need for a channel through which women's organizations could share information, advocate for influencing government policy and mobilize to take collective action on issues pertaining to their welfare and status. With a membership of over three hundred organizations countrywide, WFSL has been engaged in activities geared towards training, research, advocacy, sensitization and awareness raising on a number of issues including legal reform, equal representation of women in decision-making positions and sexual and gender-based violence. In terms of sexual and gender-based violence, WFSL receives reports from victims and refers these cases to the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police, which was created to combat the high incidence of sexual violence after the war.

To see Rosaline's full profile see "[Local Efforts](#)" on the CLG Website

Hala Alkarib

Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)

Name: Hala Alkarib

Region: Horn of Africa

Current Position: Regional Director, Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)

Website: www.sihanet.org

Biography: Hala Alkarib has worked for a number of years as gender specialist and community worker for international organizations, foreign aid departments and local civil society groups in Sudan and the Horn of Africa sub-region as well as a refugee counselor in Canada. She has been part of various national and regional research teams on women, refugees and displaced rights in the Horn of Africa. Currently, she is the Regional Director of Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA).



Work in the Field: SIHA began in 1994 when a group of women activists from the Horn of Africa recognized the need for an indigenous regional coalition of civil society groups that could work together learning from one another and campaigning for the rights of women and girls. SIHA's vision is that all women and girls in the Horn of Africa must have the right to live in a peaceful and just environment and to exercise their rights as human beings. One of the organization's core principles is to promote the acceptance of women as equal citizens and to recognize their contributions to society.

To see Hala Alkarib's full profile see "[Local Efforts](#)" on the CLG Website

Renifa Madenga

Office of the Prosecutor- UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

Name: Renifa Madenga

Region: Sub-Saharan Africa

Current Position: Appeals Counsel in the Office of the Prosecutor- United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

Education: PhD candidate at the Southern and Eastern African Regional Centre for Women's Law (SEARWL)

Biography: Renifa Madenga has over twenty years experience in the field of human rights related to gender, juvenile justice, transitional justice and criminal litigation at both national and international level. Renifa is a PhD candidate at the Southern and Eastern African Regional Centre for Women's Law (SEARWL) and a member of the Zimbabwean Women Lawyers' Association and the Zimbabwean Coalition Group. She has been working at the ICTR since 2001, currently serving as an Appeals Counsel in the Office of the Prosecutor and is a member of the OTP/ICTR Sexual Violence Committee. During her time with ICTR she has prosecuted perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes and interacted with rape victims before, during and after trials. Prior to her ICTR appointment, Renifa served as the Executive Director of Musasa Project, an NGO focusing on Gender Violence in Zimbabwe. She also worked under the Ministry of Justice as a magistrate serving on the Regional Bench presiding over Victim Friendly Courts established to deal with rape and sexual violence relating to vulnerable persons.

Work in the Field: Renifa's area of interest is action orientated research. Her current research, *Using Women's Voices/Experiences To Interrogate The Efficacy Of The International Criminal Justice System (ICJS) On Rape: The Case Of Rwanda 1994 Genocide* (with the Southern and Eastern African Regional Centre for Women's Law: Africa), explores the lived reality and experience of rape survivors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. This study is sited in the web of fears, needs, relationships and anxieties that affect survivors of rape committed during the Rwandan genocide and

their interactions with the international criminal justice system at the ICTR.

The Eastern African Regional Centre for Women's Law (SEARWL) has successfully taught on researching, reforming and implementing human rights legal reforms as they affect women and girls. It undertakes a holistic approach to problems encountered by women in the region and continent of Africa and its research findings have a far reaching impact on legal reforms in respective countries.

To see Renifa Madenga's full profile see "[Local Efforts](#)" on the CLG Website

the global sexual violence network:

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The Center on Law and Globalization encourages you to contribute to our discussions. We aim to develop a global network connecting individuals with this common interest through our social media platforms, which in combination with our website and newsletter will be used to create a resource of case law, institutions, and individuals who are working in this area.

For questions or comments please email Allison Lynch, Center Development and Communications Associate, at alynch@abfn.org



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