

## MINI-GRANTS EMPOWER WOMEN AND GIRLS



Kenyan women join together to end violence

When three women shared the Nobel Peace Prize last October, it sent a clear message to women and girls across the globe that *their peacemaking efforts can make a difference*. In Israel, the West Bank, and Kenya, CRT mini-grants are making that message a reality.

Jackie Ogega, a Kenyan woman currently living in New York, has long wanted to do something to help the women at home. Her village in rural Kenya is the site of periodic outbreaks of ethnic conflict and a high level of violence against women. Recognizing that a society tolerating one form of violence will tolerate others, Jackie launched an effort to end violence against women and to work for a more peaceful society. In August 2011, she brought together 55 men and women from the local Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities to learn conflict resolution skills, build

relationships, and develop action plans. This was the first time men and women from the two tribes had been together in the same training, and it was a great success. In September, Jackie convened a series of women-to-women storytelling sessions. Seventy-five women have participated to date, sharing their stories about rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and economic exploitation, and beginning a process of healing. A public event in March brought religious leaders, tribal chiefs, government officials and elders into the process. Religious leaders offered the use of church resources, and village chiefs promised to enforce laws prohibiting violence against women. The women have also initiated their own micro-loan program and are working towards economic self-sufficiency.

In Israel, mini-grant funds are being used to train a new generation of women activists. Esther Herzog and others from *Shin, the Israeli Movement for the Equal Representation of Women*, have created the Young Women's Parliament. This project teaches Arab and Jewish Israeli high school students about women's rights and gives them experience with political advocacy. One local event asked: *What do we mean when we talk about social justice?* Another addressed misrepresentation of women in the media and how to move from silence and oppression to activism. In March over 100 young women visited the Knesset (Israeli Parliament), met with women members, learned how a Parliamentary committee works, watched a debate in session, and introduced their own piece of legislation on women's rights. One young woman commented: *"I discovered that I have capabilities like how to take part in a debate and I discovered my desire to be active in this universe."*

Other mini-grants: Elana Rozenman created a women's garden memorial in the Galilee; Mohammed Dajani led a seminar for young women from the West Bank on the Qu'ranic basis of nonviolence; and Olivia Bezelel conducted training on trauma healing. Read reports at [www.c-r-t.org/minigrants](http://www.c-r-t.org/minigrants)

### SECOND ROUND OF MINI-GRANTS FUNDED

CRT recently awarded a second year of funding to the *Young Women's Parliament* in Israel and to *Mpanzi* for their project combating violence in Kenya. In addition, four new projects were awarded mini-grants:

*Mercy Weaver of Dreams Program* in Honduras will conduct workshops with marginalized young women on alternatives to violence and trauma healing.

*The Association for the Commemoration of Bat-Chen Shahak* will bring sixth graders from neighboring Jewish and Arab Israeli towns together to learn about each other's culture and to create a joint peace project.

*Shlomit Lir* will develop a common website for women peace activists in Israel and promote women's involvement in peace building.

*Naima Zaidan* will teach women in a Palestinian village in the West Bank the skills of organic gardening and help them develop kitchen gardens to feed their families and generate income.

## News from CRT

**Women's Interfaith Network of Sarasota-Bradenton**, with over 100 members, hosted lectures, films and discussions about the movement of women seeking to be ordained as priests in the Roman Catholic Church, Haitian spirituality in the face of catastrophe, and myths and truths about Muslim women.

**Mohammed Dajani**, CRT peacemaker and founder of *Wasatia*, served as faculty in a course co-sponsored by *Oberlin College and Al Quds University*. Dr. Dajani: "Muslims are taught that Christians and Jews are the enemies of Islam and Christians and Jews are taught that Islam is a false religion. Should we stand by and watch that chasm widen and widen until it blows up or should we work to bridge it to avert the catastrophe?"

*Women Reborn: A Case Study of the Intersection of Women, Religion and Peace Building in a Palestinian Village in Israel* by **Andrea Blanch, Esther Herzog, and Ibtisam Mahameed** has been accepted by the United States Institute of Peace for a forthcoming volume on women, religion and peace building. <http://www.c-r-t.org/research/>.

In February **Jackie Ogega** presented a public lecture in Washington, DC, entitled: *A True Story on Ending FGM/C (female genital mutilation/cutting) across Generations*. In August she hosted a public event at the United Nations featuring her CRT-sponsored work.

## WOMEN REBORN EXPANDS TO HIGH-RISK COMMUNITY

The first three years of *Women Reborn*, the Palestinian women's empowerment project in northern Israel, were a striking success. At the beginning, few of the women could imagine a goal for themselves. Now they are going back to school, getting jobs, starting their own businesses, and becoming politically active. Over 1,500 women have participated.

In September, *Women Reborn* expanded to two new communities. One site, Jisr al Zarqa, is the only all-Arab town on the coast of Israel, left in place after the 1948 war to provide labor for new Jewish towns. Jisr al Zarqa has the lowest income level of all towns and villages in Israel and the highest high school drop-out rate. Social and health problems are endemic, illiteracy is rampant, and crime rates are among the highest in the country. Previous efforts to address these social issues have been unsuccessful.



Over 250 children and youth attended the event in Jisr Al Zarqa organized by Women Reborn Phase II

Despite these challenges, *Women Reborn Phase II* is taking hold. Many villagers were initially skeptical, and only seven participants could be recruited for the first class. But the women decided that by working together they could make a change, and 150 people attended their first public event. For a class project, the women organized a children's day for over 250 young people, and plans for year two are getting an enthusiastic response. *Women Reborn* appears poised to replicate its earlier success, in a town that most people had given up on.

## PEACE4TARPON GAINS NATIONAL ATTENTION

The philosophy and skills of peace building are just as important at home as they are in global conflict zones. The *Institute for Economics and Peace* estimates that if the U.S. could reduce violence and crime to levels equal to Canada's, we would save \$89 billion annually, generate \$272 billion in additional economic activity, and create 2.7 million jobs.

*Peace4Tarpon: A Trauma Informed Community Initiative* is quickly gaining national attention as a model for the development of more peaceful cities and towns. The project began in 2011 when Vice Mayor and CRT board member Robin Saenger realized that many of the issues facing her city of Tarpon Springs – including homelessness, substance abuse, and others – stemmed from exposure to violence. She reached out to local leaders and received the endorsement of the City Council and the Mayor. Over 35 groups and organizations, including the business and faith communities and individual Tarpon citizens, are currently involved. *Peace4Tarpon* has been featured in the local media, in national journals, at conferences and on trauma-related blogs and websites as possibly the "first trauma-informed city" in the country. See <http://www.peace4tarpon.org/>.



Homeless Outreach Officer Jose Yourgules plays a leadership role in Peace4Tarpon