The Second Annual Women and Justice Conference, “Gender-Based Violence and Justice in South Asia,” is hosted by Cornell Law School’s Avon Global Center for Women and Justice together with Jindal Global Law School and developed in collaboration with UN Women, Virtue Foundation, Kriti Team, the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life at Brandeis University, and Acid Survivors Trust International (ASTI). The Conference is being held in New Delhi, India, 22 and 23 October 2011 at the India Habitat Centre.

Background

Violence against women and girls is a widespread and tragic problem around the world. Domestic violence, sexual violence, and other types of violence are pervasive in every country. However, the context within which these crimes occur and the weapons used to perpetrate them often differ by country. Violence occurs globally in public spaces and workplaces, as well as within the private realm. In their own countries, human rights advocates are tirelessly working to eradicate gender-based violence by, among other things, drafting and enacting laws, taking steps to implement them, and ensuring access to justice for victims of violence. The global movement to eradicate violence against women has recognized that this effort must include stakeholders from across sectors and disciplines and that our approaches should be coordinated and multi-faceted.

Conference Objectives

The Second Annual Women and Justice Conference brings together stakeholders working on eradicating violence against women and girls from around the world, particularly from South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) and the United States. Although working on similar issues, there are too few opportunities for us to share knowledge and strategies, and to network.

In addition to creating a dialogue across national boundaries, the Women and Justice Conference is aimed at fostering interactions between people who often operate in isolation from each other although working towards the same shared goals. To this end, this event brings together judges, scholars of law and other disciplines, human rights activists, survivors of violence, health care and legal professionals, and policy makers:

- To foster discussion on law, policy developments, and advocacy strategies to address gender-based violence.
• To enhance international collaboration and networks of stakeholders working to advance access to justice for women and girls.
• To examine opportunities for using international human rights frameworks and mechanisms to address gender-based violence.
• To engage academia and scholarly works to inform the development of advocacy tools and strategies to address gender-based violence.
• To support and strengthen national and international women’s movements.

**Conference Themes**

The plenary and parallel sessions will address the following questions:

• What are the key challenges facing South Asian and other countries in preventing gender violence and ensuring access to justice for survivors?
• What innovative strategies have been effective? Are they transferrable to other contexts?
• How can international human rights mechanisms and norms be used to enhance compliance with and fill gaps in national laws?
• What steps have been taken by stakeholders, including policymakers, to improve implementation and compliance with existing laws?
• How can the views and voices of survivors be (more) effectively incorporated in efforts to eradicate gender-based violence?
• What unexpected consequences have we seen from laws aimed at eradicating gender-based violence?
• How does economic empowerment relate to violence against women?
• What forms of violence impact girls and young adults and how should strategic and policy design efforts take them into account?
• How can governments end the widespread culture of impunity for gender-based violence during times of conflict?
• What efforts have been made to change societal attitudes towards gender and violence through, e.g., media outreach and engaging men and boys? What kinds of efforts have been successful?

**Conference Participants**

The conference will convene over two hundred people from nearly fifteen countries. Participants include senior and distinguished judges from national and international courts, including judges from the highest courts of Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka, as well as judges from high and appeal courts of the United States and India. Reaching across disciplines and borders, the event will engage economists, women’s studies scholars, legal professionals and scholars, and health professionals, as well as leading human rights advocates who are key figures in the global movement to end violence against women.
Conference Format

The conference will open with an inaugural session. During this two-day conference, morning plenary sessions will be followed by three parallel panels each day. The parallel panels are designed to encourage greater audience participation and ensure that we can focus on important sub-themes. A commentator has been designated for each parallel session. Each day, the parallel sessions will be followed by an afternoon plenary panel on which the commentator for each session will highlight connections and key points made during the parallel sessions. To encourage participation and active discussions, we have asked panelists in parallel sessions to limit their remarks to ten minutes and panelists in plenary sessions to limit their remarks to fifteen minutes. The chair of each plenary and parallel session will lead a discussion among the panelists by posing questions of the panelists, offering his or her own input, and inviting questions from the audience.

Our partner organization, Kriti Team, will host an information-sharing table where organizations are encouraged to share materials about their organizations as well as materials that relate to the substantive themes of the conference. The conference stationary and other conference materials have been created by women survivors of domestic violence who work in community level industries and the income received from these products will support their life and livelihood.

Conference Outcomes

Cornell Law School’s Avon Global Center and its partner organizations will publish a report that summarizes and highlights key proceedings from the conference. The conference report as well as recordings of the proceedings will be made available on www.womenandjustice.org. We hope that the international interactions and connections made at this event will reinforce existing initiatives and contribute to the development of further effective and creative solutions to eradicate violence and to improve access to justice for women and girls.