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I. Overview

The Avon Global Center for Women and Justice at Cornell Law School works with judges, legal professionals, and governmental and non-governmental organizations to improve access to justice in an effort to eliminate violence against women and girls. The Center was established in 2009 by a grant from the Avon Foundation for Women.

This report summarizes the Center’s activities from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014. Initiatives included the 2013 Women & Justice Conference held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, NY on the topic of State Responsibility for Eliminating Violence Against Women: The Due Diligence Principle and the Role of Judges; clinical projects addressing issues ranging from accountability for sexual violence in South Africa’s schools to human trafficking in India to child marriage in Bangladesh; the ongoing development of the Center’s Women & Justice Collection of resources; and the provision of legal research assistance to judges.

The Center strives to serve as a dynamic resource for Cornell University and Cornell Law School by providing students exceptional learning experiences while contributing in a meaningful way to scholarship and programming in the interest of women globally.

The Avon Global Center for Women and Justice at Cornell Law School held its Fourth Annual Women & Justice Conference on December 10-12, 2013 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, NY. More than 100 senior and distinguished judges, human rights lawyers, and activists from over 15 countries were in attendance. The conference was co-sponsored by the Avon Foundation for Women, the Virtue Foundation, the Dorothea S. Clarke Program in Feminist Jurisprudence at Cornell Law School, the University of Miami School of Law Human Rights Clinic, and the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

This year’s conference topic was *State Responsibility for Eliminating Violence Against Women: The Due Diligence Principle and the Role of Judges*. Under international law, governments have an obligation to refrain from committing acts of violence against women and to act with due diligence to prevent and respond to violence committed by non-governmental actors. The Conference focused on the role of judges in realizing this obligation.

The conference was launched on Human Rights Day with a panel of experts who discussed how far the right to end gender-based violence has come since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights twenty years ago and how much work is left to be done. A reception celebrating the Vienna Declaration’s 20th Anniversary immediately followed the panel.

The second day of the conference was opened with welcoming remarks from Stewart J. Schwab, the Allan R. Tessler Dean and Professor of Law at Cornell Law School. He also introduced the keynote speaker, U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences Rashida Manjoo. Professor Manjoo’s keynote address focused on “State Responsibility to Act with Due Diligence: Practice and Reality.” It discussed her recent groundbreaking report that elaborated upon the meaning of the due diligence obligation and evaluated its implementation by countries worldwide. The keynote address was followed by three panel discussions, with presentations from advocates, lawyers, and judges who are working to end gender-based violence around the world by holding governments accountable to their
international obligations. The day ended with closing remarks from Carol Kurzig, President of the Avon Foundation for Women, who announced the Foundation’s new commitment of $600,000 to support the Avon Global Center’s work to end violence against women.

An in-depth, closed-door judicial roundtable was held on the final day of the conference with participating judges from countries around the world, including Kenya, South Africa, Nepal, India, Ghana, the Bahamas, Tanzania, Mexico, Taiwan, Canada, and the United States. The judicial roundtable topics were drawn from Rashida Manjoo’s report and included: prevention and protection; the duty to protect women against violence and cultural or religious arguments; investigation, prosecution, punishment and reparations; and resource limitations, political pushback, and strategies to move forward. At lunchtime, Hon. Alyşe Işil Karakaş of the European Court of Human Rights spoke on the topic of “Positive Obligations of the State on Domestic Violence: Remarks on the Case Law of the European Court of Human Rights.” The roundtable gave judges the opportunity to share creative strategies and success stories from adjudicating gender-based violence cases in their own courts and countries.

By bringing together judges and other stakeholders from around the world, the conference facilitated an important discussion on the role of judges in realizing states’ responsibility to eliminate violence against women. The Center thanks all conference participants for an extremely valuable exchange of information, energy, and ideas.
Day 1: December 10, 2013

Human Rights Day Panel: Women’s Rights as Human Rights: 20 years after Vienna

OPENING REMARKS

Kim Azzarelli, Founding Partner, Seneca Point Global; President, Women in the World Foundation; and Co-Founder and Steering Committee Chair, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice at Cornell Law School

Dr. Joseph Salim, President and Co-Founder, Virtue Foundation

MODERATOR

Cynthia Grant Bowman, Dorothea S. Clarke Professor of Law, Cornell Law School and Steering Committee Member, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice

PANELISTS

Liesl Gerntholtz, Executive Director, Women’s Rights Division, Human Rights Watch

Lenora Lapidus, Director, Women’s Rights Project, American Civil Liberties Union

Rashida Manjoo, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences and Professor, Dept. of Public Law, University of Cape Town

Hon. Ann C. Williams, U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit and Steering Committee Member, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice
Day 2: December 11, 2013

UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women Rashida Manjoo delivers her keynote address.

Welcoming Remarks

Stewart J. Schwab, Allan R. Tessler Dean and Professor of Law, Cornell Law School

Keynote Address: State Responsibility to Act with Due Diligence: Practice and Reality

Rashida Manjoo, U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences and Professor, Department of Public Law, University of Cape Town

Panel 1: State Responsibility to Act with Due Diligence to Eliminate Violence against Women: From Theory to Practice

MODERATOR

Muna Ndulo, Professor of Law, Cornell Law School and Steering Committee Member, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice

PANELISTS

Caroline Bettinger-López, Associate Professor of Clinical Legal Education and Director, Human Rights Clinic, University of Miami School of Law

Bahaa Ezzelarab, Legal Advisor, North African Litigation Initiative, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

Robin Phillips, Executive Director, The Advocates for Human Rights

Mónica Roa, Robin Phillips, and Bahaa Ezzelarab.
Panel 2: State Responsibility to Act with Due Diligence to Eliminate Violence against Women: Victim Care and Services

MODERATOR
Elizabeth Brundige, Executive Director, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice and Visiting Assistant Clinical Professor, Cornell Law School

PANELISTS
Cindy Dyer, Vice President, Human Rights, Vital Voices Global Partnership
Hon. Swati Chauhan, Family Court, Mumbai, India
Hon. Virginia Kendall, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois
Riet Groenen, Chief, Ending Violence Against Women Section, U.N. Women

Panel 3: State Responsibility to Act with Due Diligence to Eliminate Violence against Women: The Role of Judges

MODERATOR
Hon. Joanna Seybert, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York and Steering Committee Member, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice

PANELISTS
Hon. Desiree Bernard, Caribbean Court of Justice
Hon. Swati Chauhan, Family Court, Mumbai, India
Hon. James Aaron Makau, High Court of Kenya at Meru
Day 3: December 12, 2013 – Judicial Roundtable

Carol Kurzig, President of the Avon Foundation for Women, announces the Foundation’s new commitment of $600,000 to the Center.

Hon. Liling Lee discusses protection and prevention for gender-based violence victims in Taiwan.

Closing Remarks
Carol Kurzig, President, Avon Foundation for Women

Welcoming Remarks

Protection and Prevention

CHAIR
Hon. Barbara Rothstein, U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington and Steering Committee Member, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice

OPENING COMMENTS
Hon. Liling Lee, Family Division, Taipei District Court, Taiwan
Hon. James Aaron Makau, High Court of Kenya at Meru

Hon. Liling Lee discusses protection and prevention for gender-based violence victims in Taiwan.
Duty to Protect Women against Violence and Cultural or Religious Arguments

CHAIR

Hon. Joanna Seybert, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York and Steering Committee Member, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice

OPENING COMMENTS

Hon. Sauda Mjasiri, Court of Appeal, Tanzania
Hon. Claire (Chia-hua) Wu, Taipei District Court, Taiwan

Positive Obligations of the State on Domestic Violence: Remarks on the Case Law of the European Court of Human Rights

SPEAKER

Hon. Ayşe Işıl Karakaş, European Court of Human Rights

Investigation, Prosecution, Punishment, and Reparations

CHAIR

Hon. Virginia Kendall, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

OPENING COMMENTS

Hon. Josselyne Béjar, Criminal Court, Mexico
Hon. Lucie LaVigne, Court of Queen's Bench of New Brunswick, Canada
Hon. Laura Jacobson discusses the resource limitations that judges face in working with gender-based violence victims in their courtrooms.

Resource Limitations, Political Pushback: Strategies to Move Forward

CHAIR

Hon. Ann C. Williams, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and Steering Committee Member, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice

OPENING COMMENTS

Hon. Laura Jacobson, New York State Supreme Court, Kings County

Hon. Avril Lovelace-Johnson, Court of Appeal, Ghana

Insights and Recommendations from Roundtable Sessions

COMMENTATORS

Hon. Janet Bond Arterton, U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut (Protection and Prevention)

Hon. Desiree Bernard, Caribbean Court of Justice (Cultural and/or Religious Arguments)

Hon. Mel Flanagan, Milwaukee County Circuit Court, Wisconsin (Investigation, Prosecution, Punishment, and Reparations)

Hon. Martha Koome, Court of Appeal, Kenya (Resource Limitations, Political Pushback)

Closing Remarks and Thanks
2013 Conference Feedback

“The Conference [was] enlightening, which served to further heighten awareness of gender bias. [I] also made very valuable contacts with some of the NGOs participating, and learned of the existence of international resources available for judicial research and training on the topic of gender bias.” – Hon. Anita Allen, President, Court of Appeal of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

“I appreciate your efforts to make this conference a success. Thank you for organizing a great opportunity for judges to interact and exchange ideas.” – Hon. Swati Chauhan, Family Court, Mumbai, India

“The conference and judicial roundtable provided an opportunity for an in depth discussion of an intractable issue and highlighted and inspired the importance of focusing attention on the work that needs to be done.” – Hon. Joan Churchill, former President of the U.S. National Association of Women Judges

“What a wonderful event. Thank you for all the efforts of your team and your leadership.” – Denise Scotto, U.N. Representative, Int’l Federation of Women in Legal Careers and International Federation of Women Lawyers

“The event promoted valuable dialogues among the judiciary and helped to find ways to eliminate violence against women and girls.” – Hon. Claire (Chia-hua) Wu, Taipei District Court, Taiwan

“I really enjoyed the conference and meeting the different participants. I came back energized and full of ideas.” – Hon. Lucie LaVigne, Court of Queen’s Bench of New Brunswick, Canada

“I wanted to thank you again for letting me participate and observe in your very interesting, relevant, and well organized event. Congratulations on a fantastic job!” – Leigh Swigart, Ph.D., Director of Programs in International Justice and Society International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life, Brandeis University

“I am inspired by the women judges and participants and all that they have done and continue to do to enhance and protect the rights of women and children around the world.” – Judge participant

“I loved every bit of the conference, it was well organized, and I was blessed by the same.” – Hon. James A. Makau, High Court of Kenya

“Thank you again for such a wonderful conference! I very much appreciate all your work to put such an event with such interesting and pertinent information together.” – Jessica O’Herron, Global Citizenship Fellow, U.S. Fund for UNICEF

“Thank you so much for allowing me to participate in the Senior Roundtable for judges. I learnt a lot from the discussions and made new friends.” – Hon. Barbara Tetteh-Charway, Circuit Court of Ghana

“I was very thrilled to be amongst such distinguished people, and I certainly learned a lot. I had the honor to sit next to Judge Makau and we had a great conversation about law in our respective countries, Kenya and Armenia. Thank you very much for organizing this event.” – Lusine Mehrabyan, Cornell University Student Class of 2014
III. Initiatives

A. Clinical Projects

The following Avon Global Center projects were undertaken by the Cornell International Human Rights Clinic, taught by Avon Global Center Executive Director and Visiting Assistant Clinical Professor Liz Brundige with the assistance of Avon Global Center Women and Justice Fellows Naureen Shameem and Corey Calabrese.

1. Study of Sexual Violence against Girls in South Africa’s Schools: Gaps in Accountability

The Center worked with the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa on a study of sexual violence by teachers in South African schools. This project examined the gaps in accountability that exist for teacher-student abuse in Gauteng Province, considering why school-based sexual abuse remains a serious problem despite South Africa’s promising laws and policies.

In August 2013, following several months of desk research, a Center team travelled to South Africa to work with their CALS partners in conducting interviews with magistrates, police officers, service providers, government and school officials, and people met in everyday interactions. In 2014, the Center and its partners finalized a report based on their findings, which includes recommendations for stakeholders aimed at informing and supporting their efforts to combat impunity in South African schools.

The Center, Clinic, and CALS launched the report on May 9, 2014, at events held jointly in Johannesburg and Ithaca, NY, which were connected by Skype. In South Africa, the launch event featured comments by government officials and civil society representatives on the report and proposed strategies to eliminate school-based sexual violence.

CALS is now using the report to advocate for change among government actors at all levels. In its May newsletter, one of the South African teachers unions, which had collectively come under criticism in the report, urged its members to read the report and its findings and “speak out if you are aware of any acts of sexual violence against learners.” It declared that it would not assist any members found guilty of such offences or permit them continued membership in the union.

2. India U.N. Trafficking Protocol Compliance Project

In May 2011, India ratified the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (U.N.
Trafficking Protocol) and has undertaken other important institutional initiatives to combat human trafficking. However, India’s laws do not fully comply with its international law obligations, and its laws and policies do not afford meaningful assistance to trafficking victims.

The Center and Clinic worked with the University of Chicago Law School International Human Rights Clinic and the Jindal Global Law School Centre for Health Law, Ethics and Technology, based in Sonipat, India, on an analysis of India’s anti-human-trafficking laws and policies and their compliance with the U.N. Anti-Trafficking Protocol. The analysis was based in part on field research conducted by the Center and its partners in Delhi and Kolkata in fall 2012 and spring 2013. The Center and its partners issued a discussion paper in spring 2014 that described the project’s findings and offered recommendations for strengthening India’s legal and policy responses to human trafficking.

3. Research on the Causes, Conditions, and Consequences of Women’s Imprisonment

In early summer 2013, the Center and Clinic launched a report, co-authored with the University of Chicago Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic and the Public Defender’s Office in Argentina, on Women in Prison in Argentina: Causes, Conditions, and Consequences. In July 2013, they also completed a project on the manifestation of these issues globally. Center Executive Director Liz Brundige presented on this research at an expert group meeting convened to inform the work of Rashida Manjoo, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

These clinical projects continued to have an important impact, and Center faculty and staff remain involved in related global dialogues. In August 2013, the Special Rapporteur submitted a report, Pathways to, Conditions and Consequences of Incarceration for Women, to the U.N. General Assembly. The report acknowledged the Center’s research and the contributions of the expert meeting, and it cited the Center’s 2011 report, From Protection to Punishment: Post-Conviction Barriers to Justice for Domestic Violence Survivor-Defendants in New York State.

In addition, the U.S. National Association of Women Judges’ Women and Prison Committee provided the Center’s Argentina report to a group of scholars and advocates, who cited it in a submission to a group of U.S. Senators seeking reversal of a decision to turn the women’s prison in Danbury, Connecticut into a prison for men. The plan included the transfer of most of the women prisoners to a facility in Alabama more than 1,000 miles away. Thanks to the engagement of the group of Senators, judges, and others on this issue, the decision was
reversed for the great majority of women prisoners in Danbury (excluding non-U.S. citizens) and a new building in Connecticut was built that will enable them to remain closer to their children and families.

In light of the Center’s work on women’s imprisonment, Ms. Brundige was invited to join a group of experts at an international symposium on women in prison. Hosted by the Dui Hua Foundation and Prison Reform International, the symposium took place in Hong Kong in February 2014. Ms. Brundige presented a paper on violence against women as a cause and consequence of women’s incarceration.


In December 2013, the Center made a submission on child marriage in Bangladesh to the Women’s Rights and Gender Section (WRGS) of the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Committee had invited civil society groups to present information on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage, in order to inform its report on this topic to the U.N. Human Rights Council.

The Center’s submission was made in collaboration with Justice Imman Ali of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. It included the Center’s research for Justice Ali on the causes, consequences, and legal framework of child marriage; its links to sexual harassment; and the impact of birth and marriage registration and of discriminatory personal laws on the practice. It also included a lecture on child marriage that was delivered by Justice Ali at Cornell Law School in September 2013.


In January 2014, the Center partnered with the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and INTERIGHTS on an innovative submission to the African Commission on Human Rights. EIPR and INTERIGHTS recently initiated a complaint before the Commission – Mahmoud and Abdel-Rahman v Egypt – following Egypt’s failure to address multiple violations by army personnel against female detainees in what is known as the “virginity testing” case.

In March 2011, Samira Ibrahim and Rasha Abdel-Rahman suffered abuses by military personnel while they were being detained at a military prison after attending a sit-in at Tahrir Square. Together with fifteen other female detainees, Ibrahim and Abdel-Rahman were subjected to a forced genital examination to determine their virginity. Members of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) made statements that “virginity tests” were aimed at protecting soldiers from allegations of rape. In March 2012, a military court found the doctor accused of performing the forced genital examinations innocent of all charges.

The Center provided research assistance to INTERIGHTS and EIPR in developing a submission on the merits to the African Commission, alleging violations of the rights guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights to non-discrimination; equal protection before the law; prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; and independence of the courts. The Center focused, in particular, on current international and regional human rights standards, case law and commentary on gender-based violence as discrimination, the state’s due diligence duty with respect to sexual violence, gender stereotyping as discrimination, and sexual violence in public and political space.
6. Research on the United Nations’ Approaches to Gender-Based Violence

In January 2014, the Center undertook a research project to analyze the multiple approaches of United Nations bodies to the worldwide problem of gender-based violence. The Center examined the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women’s engagement with gender-based violence as a main thematic issue and in the development of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Center’s research traced the evolution of binding and soft law on gender-based violence and its implementation. Professor Rashida Manjoo, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, cited the research of Avon Global Center Women and Justice Fellows Corey Calabrese and Naureen Shameem in a May 2014 report to the U.N. Human Rights Council.

7. South Asia Workshop on Violence Against Women and Access to Emergency Contraception

In spring 2014, the Center undertook a project with the Center for Reproductive Rights’ (CRR) Global Program that examined and addressed the issue of access to emergency contraception for survivors of sexual violence in South Asia.

The Center prepared a background memorandum on legal standards and policies related to this issue in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. While the U.N. Committee against Torture has concluded that the failure to legalize distribution of emergency contraceptives to survivors of sexual violence constitutes a violation of the U.N. Convention against Torture, many survivors of gender-based violence in the region continue to find their access severely limited.

The memorandum informed a regional litigation workshop hosted by CRR and its South Asia Reproductive Justice and Accountability Initiative (SARJAI) in Nepal in March 2014. Center staff and students contributed to the workshop discussions and served as rapporteurs.

8. Shadow Letter on India’s Implementation of CEDAW

Between April and June 2014, the Center worked with the Center for Reproductive Rights to prepare a shadow letter that was submitted to the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The letter sought to inform the Committee’s July 2014 periodic review of India’s implementation of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The letter highlighted selected issues of concern, including child marriage and maternal mortality. It recommended questions to be posed to the government and potential language to be
incorporated into the Committee’s concluding observations.


Zambia’s domestic laws recognize the vulnerability of children and grant them special legal protection. Despite this protective legal framework, many children remain vulnerable and are unable to access the protection entitled to them by law. Prosecutors and magistrates, who constitute the lower levels of the Zambian judiciary, grapple with enormous backlogs, lack research capacity, and do not have access to statutory updates or relevant case law. As a result, children in contact with the law, particularly the many young girls who are victims of gender-based violence, remain unable to access justice through the courts.

The Center and Clinic worked with the Center for Law and Justice, a Zambian organization, to address this gap. In the spring 2014 semester, they drafted a handbook that includes a compendium of Zambian juvenile law (understood as the law governing children in contact with the law) and that seeks to function as a practice guide for juvenile law judges, magistrates, and advocates. Drawing upon legal resources and consultations with judicial officers and legal practitioners, the handbook addresses issues such as the constitutional, statutory, and human rights framework of juvenile law, special issues that arise in cases of child rape, and procedural protections for child victims and witnesses. The Attorney General of Zambia authored the foreword to this Handbook.

The Handbook will be launched in Lusaka, Zambia, on August 6, 2014. Avon Global Center Steering Committee Member Muna Ndulo will speak at the event and moderate a panel of expert commentators. Two Cornell Law students will also participate in the launch. The handbook will be distributed to magistrates, prosecutors, and others, and will be available as a free download on the internet.

10. Research on discrimination against women on the basis of sexual orientation and international human rights bodies

Female homosexual sexual conduct continues to be criminalized in a number of countries, and violence against lesbians – such as “corrective rape” – threatens women around the world. In June 2014, the Center began a project that consists of conducting research on human rights bodies’ jurisprudence and statements relating to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, focusing in particular on the rights of lesbian and bisexual women. The Center is also analyzing case law and comparative jurisprudence and preparing a memorandum exploring possibilities for research and advocacy around this issue.

B. Legal Research Support for Judges

With the assistance of Cornell Law students, the Center continues to provide research assistance for judges in the United States and around the world. The nature of requests varies from providing resources and articles on particular gender-related issues to more in-depth analysis and legal research memoranda. This research may support a judge’s adjudication of a case, development of courtroom procedures, or activities outside of the courtroom. Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014, the Center completed fifteen judicial research requests for judges in Bangladesh, India, Taiwan, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, South Africa, and the United States, as well as for the International Association of Women Judges. Responses to requests included:

- A comparative analysis of states’ implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the role of judges;
- An analysis of Tanzania’s implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Act, in light of international law and the experiences of other countries;
- Comparative research on the use of mandatory minimum sentences in sexual violence cases;
- Collection of resources on the connections among gender, HIV/AIDS and access to justice;
- Research on peace building and transitional justice processes and the role of women in these processes;
- A memorandum on the relationship between child marriage and customary or personal laws;
- An analysis of the effects of gaps in birth registration on the prevalence of child marriage in Bangladesh;
- Assistance in preparing a presentation on judicial initiatives to eliminate violence against women;
- Research on the ways that courts have addressed the balance of environmental land protections and the rights of indigenous people, including indigenous women, to use that land;
- Research on the role of judges in preventing and providing protection from violence against women;
- Assistance with a speech on indigenous law and indigenous rights, including their intersection with the human rights of women;
- Collection of resources to assist a judge in preparing a speech on the role of the judiciary in interpreting environmental law;
- Research on family courts and judges in New York State for a family court judge in Taiwan;
- Research on the use of closed-circuit television or lower-cost alternatives to protect child witnesses, relevant cost considerations, and legal challenges to these mechanisms on defendants’ rights grounds; and
- Comparative research on the admissibility of child testimony and the question of the reliability of child testimony in courts around the world, and a review of special procedures to facilitate the testimony of child victims and witnesses in multiple jurisdictions.

The Center also began work on new judicial requests relating to the use of expert witnesses to corroborate the testimony of a child victim of sexual assault; witness protection measures in sexual offence cases; Kenyan courts’ application of the country’s constitutional equality provisions to cases involving gender violence and discrimination; and the causes, consequences, and conditions of women’s imprisonment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

C. Online Women and Justice Collection

July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014 was a period of substantial growth for the Avon Global Center for Women and Justice’s online legal resources. The Center’s Women and Justice Collection, an expanded and enhanced online library of legal and other resources relating to gender-based violence and gender justice was launched last year.

The collection offers a free, searchable database of case law from more than 53 countries and eight international and regional human rights bodies. It offers unique access to over 800 judicial decisions from around the world that apply international or
domestic law to protect women’s rights and prevent and punish gender-based violence. A new, more searchable and user-friendly database has been built that can be searched by country, gender-justice-related topic, and keywords, with search results that include both case summaries and full-text decisions.

The Center's research team worked in concert with pro bono lawyers from Nixon Peabody, LLP, in order to significantly increase the database's case law coverage across a range of countries. It is now working with pro bono lawyers from White & Case, LLP, to continue the expansion. Further, the Center is developing new sets of tools for database users. The research team is adding a section on women’s human rights litigation guides to the database, expanding the reports and publications sections, and is developing a new series of fact sheets on key issues and laws related to gender-based violence.

In addition, the Center did a mapping of the most high-profile and frequently-used human rights and women’s rights research guides online, and reached out to the law schools and international legal institutions that administer them to add the database to these guides. The Center has now embarked on a project to update the look and functionality of the database on its website, making it a more dynamic and intuitive tool for advocates for gender justice. Amongst other changes, this update will make the search engine more powerful and allow for searches within all database materials, including international and regional human rights instruments.

D. Online Presence: Media Outreach, Website Usage, Social Media

The Avon Global Center for has greatly expanded its total social media reach and overall online presence over a few short years. Today, the Center focuses its social media to better reach supporters of women’s rights worldwide so that their work to afford protection and redress to survivors of gender-based violence may be usefully informed and augmented by our targeted legal resources.

Also in fall 2013, the Center implemented a new online Communications Strategy that shapes its approach in website development and expansion and targeting of our social media presence and outreach. The strategy outlines the Center’s
overall goals: 1) to become one of the world’s leading platforms for law and gender justice; 2) to engage our current audience(s) in innovative ways and build new online communities; 3) to distribute our content where audiences are active online to increase effectiveness and awareness of the work of the Center; 4) to direct traffic to the Center website; 5) to cultivate partnerships to increase the Center’s online following and increase our visibility and profile; and 6) to streamline and modernize the Center’s website, allowing for increased use and user engagement.

The Center’s online reach is constantly growing. Its number of Twitter followers has increased by over 180% since summer 2013, and its Facebook following has also substantially increased over the past period. In addition, the Center’s website has a broad reach, with an average of over 59,000 unique page visitors per year from 2009-2013. In 2013 the Center embarked on a project to further modernize and upgrade its website to increase accessibility and improve user navigation and is working to develop user-friendly pathways, develop clear calls to action, and clearly highlight the Center’s work on gender-based violence.

The Center has also launched a fully branded blog featuring incisive posts highlighting clinical projects, cases, and other resources from our Women and Justice Collection, events, judicial requests, and featuring cutting-edge commentary on gender-based violence and women’s access to justice.

In 2013, the Center carried out three important online campaigns for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The Center hosted a series of blog posts from around the world highlighting ongoing hurdles and innovative new strategies in the field of women’s human rights; highlighted a daily case from the Women and Justice Collection on our blog and twitter; and carried out a photo campaign that reached out to young women on campus.

Finally, the Center’s programs and activities, as well as the related work of Center staff, received positive media coverage, including in U.S. News and World Report, South Africa’s Sunday Times, and the Crime Report. Recent news coverage is available at http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/womenandjustice/About-Us/Avon-Global-Center-in-the-News.cfm.
E. Research Associates Program

The Avon Global Center has had the privilege of working with nineteen student research associates and interns in 2013-2014. In the summer of 2013, the Avon Global Center hosted two law student research associates, two undergraduate research assistants, and one high school student, who all made a valuable contribution to the multiple facets of the Center’s work. Among other activities, they:

- Researched and summarized cases for the Center’s Women & Justice Collection;
- Entered case summaries and full-text decisions into the Center’s Women & Justice Collection database;
- Conducted research on the nature and prevalence of sexual violence in South African schools, the relationship between violence against women and the privatization of prisons, and the intersections of race, gender and violence against women in custodial settings, in support of the Center’s clinical projects;
- Conducted cite-checking for Center reports;
- Identified notable news and other developments relating to gender justice and wrote posts on them for the Center’s Facebook page; and
- Prepared memoranda and other research documents in response to judicial requests.

During the 2013-14 school year, the Center had the opportunity to work with ten research associates and interns, including four Cornell Law students, two Cornell Law graduates, one Harvard University graduate, and three Cornell undergraduate students. The associates’ main task was to research and summarize cases for the Center’s Women & Justice Collection, and the interns provided support for the Center’s social media, communications and events. Several of the students had non-English language skills, which they used to expand the jurisdictions covered by the Collection. Two of the research associates attended the Women and Justice Conference as rapporteurs and assisted in the development of the conference report. The research associates also assisted with the Center’s clinical projects on an ad-hoc basis.

In the summer of 2014, the Center is hosting two law student research associates, one Dartmouth graduate student intern, one Cornell undergraduate intern, and one high school student intern. They have been engaged in a number of projects, including:

- Researching and summarizing cases for the Center’s Women & Justice Collection;
- Entering case summaries and full-text decisions into the Center’s Women & Justice Collection database;
- Developing the Center’s communications strategy, drafting new materials for our website, and expanding our online reach;
- Responding to research requests from judges; and
- Assisting with several Center clinical projects.

Student research assistants provide valuable support for the Center’s work while gaining a rich learning experience. According to one of the Center’s summer 2013 law student research associates, “Conducting research for the Avon Global Center prepared me well for taking on complex and novel issues that were previously foreign to me. I loved coming to work every day because I knew the research would take me...”
places I had never been, and because it felt like the assignments really made a difference in the world. Whatever I end up doing in life, I want it to be for the benefit of less fortunate people, and the Avon Global Center really epitomizes that…. [This experience] is an inspiration that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

F. Other Center Events

During the period covered by this report, the Center hosted or co-hosted several events that highlight the diversity of issues that face gender justice advocates around the world today.

1. Child Marriage in Bangladesh

On September 30, 2013, the Avon Global Center and Cornell Law School’s Berger Center for International Legal Studies hosted Justice Imman Ali from the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

Justice Imman Ali of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

Justice Ali, a Center collaborator and expert on child marriage, laid out his views on the causes and consequences of child marriage in Bangladesh. He cited custom, poverty, and lack of information among its causes. Bangladesh currently has the third-highest rate of child marriage in the world, and its population is among the world’s most impoverished.

2. Sheltering Survivors of Human Trafficking: Lessons from the Israeli Experience

On October 4, the Center, together with Cornell Law School’s Dorothea S. Clarke Program in Feminist Jurisprudence, hosted Visiting Professor Daphna Hacker, a faculty member of the Tel Aviv University Law Faculty, for an event on approaches to human trafficking.

Professor Hacker, the author of a key research report on trafficking presented to the U.S. State Department, highlighted the positive gains of a combination of prosecution, protection and research for victims of trafficking in Israel, and discussed the need for the United States to remain a critical part of preventing trafficking and assisting its victims globally.

Professor Daphna Hacker, Tel Aviv University Law faculty.

3. Disability and Gender in Ethiopia: A Conversation with Two Ethiopian Women

On October 24, the Avon Global Center hosted Wesenyelesh Admasu of the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association and Meseret Mamo Kombolcha of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. The conversation shed light on the diverse experiences and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, including the multiple
and intersecting forms of discrimination that women with disabilities often encounter.

4. Sexual Violence in South African Schools: Gaps in Accountability

On October 28, students and faculty joined members of the International Human Rights Clinic for a discussion of their recent field work in South African schools, examining gaps in state accountability and looking at why the issue of school-based sexual abuse remains a serious problem despite strong government laws and policies. The panel also discussed opportunities available to law students through the Clinic and Avon Global Center.

5. Panel and documentary screening: U.S. Military Sexual Violence

On November 13, the Avon Global Center presented a special screening of the Academy Award-nominated documentary on the epidemic of U.S. military sexual violence, The Invisible War, followed by a panel discussion featuring Professor Doug Rawald of Cornell Law School, Kristi Taylor of the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County, New York, and Jennifer Norris of the Military Rape Crisis Center. Panelists discussed the experience of military sexual trauma and the effect of sexual trauma on victims, recent civil litigation on the issue, and legal aspects of the current military system handling charges of sexual assault in a wide-ranging discussion.

6. Panels on careers in the law, human rights, and gender justice

On February 20, 2014, the Avon Global Center and the Carl Becker House at Cornell University hosted a panel discussion for undergraduate students on pursuing legal careers. On April 9, the Center and Cornell Law School’s Office of Public Service hosted “Careers in International Human Rights,” a panel event for law students. Panelists at both events included Avon Global Center Executive Director Liz Brundige and Women and Justice Fellows Corey Calabrese and Naureen Shameem. They spoke to students about the
work of the Avon Global Center and their own experiences, and offered advice on pursuing a career in the fields of law, human rights, and gender justice.

7. U.S. Department of State International Visitors Leadership Program – Beatrice Mtetwa

On March 10, the Avon Global Center hosted Beatrice Mtetwa, a human rights lawyer and activist from Zimbabwe, and the recipient of the 2014 Secretary of State’s Award for International Women of Courage as part of the U.S. Department of State’s International Visitor Leadership Program. Avon Global Center staff and steering committee members and Cornell Law School students spoke to Ms. Mtetwa about her work and gave a presentation on the Center’s activities.

Panelists discuss the history and impact of recent legislative changes that expand the jurisdiction of tribal courts in domestic violence cases.

Panelists explained that the problem of violence against native women in the United States is currently at epidemic levels. Native women are more than twice as likely as non-Native women to be victims of domestic violence, and nearly three out of five have been assaulted by their spouses or intimate partners. When the United States reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act in 2013, it included a new provision that allows tribal courts to have criminal jurisdiction over non-tribal members in cases of domestic violence. Previously, tribal courts were only able to prosecute domestic violence offenses against their own members.

8. Panel: Violence against Native Women, Resistance and Responses

On March 12, the Avon Global Center co-sponsored a panel event on violence against native women with Cornell University’s American Indian Program, the Native American Law Student Association, and the Carl Becker House.
One of the panelists described how the hands of tribal law enforcement were tied when it came to domestic violence committed by non-tribal members. "In the past, our police department would go out and when they ascertained the perpetrator was a non-Indian, there was nothing they could do - they would drive him to the edge of the reservation and just drop him off knowing that he would walk back," said Amanda Sampson Lomayesva. The panelists were hopeful that the new provisions would help address this issue and also make it easier to advocate for reforms in the future.

9. Panel: Reproductive Rights in South Asia

On April 17, the Avon Global Center and International Human Rights Clinic hosted a panel discussion on reproductive rights and health and their links to gender-based violence in South Asia, focusing on the Center’s 2014 clinical project looking at this issue. Clinic students and faculty discussed their recent trip to Nepal and shared their experiences and insights on access to reproductive healthcare and affordable contraception, child marriage, and maternal mortality.

10. Launch Event: Sexual Violence in South Africa’s Schools, Gaps in Accountability

On May 9, the Avon Global Center and the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, released a report, “Sexual Violence by Educators in South African Schools: Gaps in Accountability.” (See above at Section III.A.1 for a discussion of the project that culminated in this report.) The report was launched at a joint event held at Cornell Law School in Ithaca, New York and the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. The two sites were connected by Skype.

The launch included discussion among the research team, government officials, educators, and civil society representatives of the report’s findings and recommendations and strategies for eliminating school-based sexual violence.

Center Executive Director Liz Brundige and three Cornell Law students spoke at the event, discussing the report’s findings. “Sexual violence by educators against learners is a devastating human rights problem in South Africa and throughout the world,” explained Ms. Brundige. “When governments fail to hold perpetrators accountable, impunity results – and this enables the abuse to continue unchecked.”

According to Meetali Jain, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, “From duplicative disciplinary processes to insufficient training of justice system actors, inadequate responses at every level have re-victimized learners and enabled the cycle of abuse to continue.”

On June 3, the Center hosted seven women participants in the U.S. State Department International Visitor Leadership Program. The women, who are advocates and leaders in their home countries, were traveling throughout the U.S. in order to investigate cooperative efforts aimed to improve community welfare and the value of grassroots efforts in addressing social issues. The women were traveling from the West African countries of Angola, Sao Tome and Principe, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde. Avon Global Center staff presented on the Center’s work, and the group discussed possibilities for future collaboration.

G. Presentations, Outreach, and Scholarly Contributions

Avon Global Center faculty and staff made the following contributions to gender justice initiatives, scholarship, and events:


*Petition to the Inter-American Commission on Sexual Violence in the U.S. Military.* In January 2014, Cornell Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic, led by Liz Brundige, Corey Calabrese, and Naureen Shameem, filed a petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on behalf of twenty current and former U.S. service men and women. The petitioners were sexually assaulted while serving in the U.S. military. Some faced retaliation from their Chain of Command for reporting the incidents, and none received sufficient access to judicial remedies. This is the first petition brought to the Commission, an independent human rights body of the Organization of American States, by survivors of sexual assault in the United States. The petition requests that the Commission conduct an investigation into these issues and recommends that the U.S. government take steps to eradicate sexual violence within the military.

*Amicus Brief on Access to Contraception in India.* In the spring semester, the International Human Rights Clinic, supervised by Ms. Brundige and Ms. Shameem, prepared an amicus brief for the Center for Reproductive Rights in support of a public interest litigation case initiated in India. The case, filed by the Human Rights Network in the High Court of Punjab and Haryana, calls on the government to protect women’s reproductive health by providing access to a full range of contraceptive methods, information, and services. The amicus brief argued, on the basis of human rights law, that women face serious barriers due to flawed state policies and the failure of the state government to implement national-level policy guarantees.

*International Symposium in Hong Kong on Women in Prison.* In February, Ms. Brundige was an invited speaker at an expert symposium on women in prison, which took place in Hong Kong.
and was hosted by the University of Hong Kong, Penal Reform International, and the Dui Hua Foundation. She spoke about the role that violence against women plays as a cause and consequence of women’s incarceration globally.

Teleconference: Combating Violence Against Women, What is Working? On May 27, Ms. Brundige moderated a teleconference event hosted by the American Bar Association. The event’s panelists were recommended to the ABA by the Center and included a judicial officer from Argentina, prosecutor from Zambia, and women’s rights NGO representative from India. They discussed practical strategies and approaches taken in their jurisdictions that have worked in combating violence against women and girls.

Article: Sexism, Sexual Violence, and Sexuality in the Schooling of Girls in Africa—A Case Study from Lusaka Province, Zambia. Executive Director Liz Brundige and Cornell Law Professor and Avon Global Center Steering Committee Member Cynthia Grant Bowman co-authored an article based on their fieldwork in Zambia, on the multiple obstacles that girls in Zambia confront in pursuing an education, including sexual violence. The article was published in the fall 2013 issue of the Texas Journal of Women and the Law.

Article: Child Sex Abuse within the Family in Sub-Saharan Africa—Challenges and Change in Current Legal and Mental Health Responses. Ms. Brundige and Professor Bowman co-authored a second article, forthcoming in the Cornell International Law Journal, which examines the legal and mental health responses to child sexual abuse within the family in Sub-Saharan Africa. While recognizing the importance of recent reforms, the article argues that they must be strengthened and broadened and must include a focus on prevention.

Stop Stoning Women Campaign. Women and Justice Fellow Naureen Shameem is co-coordinator of the international Stop Stoning Women campaign, which aims to raise awareness on this form of culturally justified violence against women and push for a worldwide ban. In October, she presented at the annual Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) conference in Sofia,
Bulgaria on stoning as a violation of women’s human rights. She is also a contributor to Thomson Reuters’ Trust Women, publishing most recently on stoning in Brunei.

UN Submission on Discrimination in Family and Cultural Life. A member of the international network Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Ms. Shameem worked on submissions to the U.N. Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice, towards their upcoming thematic report on discrimination in family and cultural life.

Advising: Prosecution of Human Trafficking. Through her membership in the Sex and Law Committee of the New York City Bar Association, Women and Justice Fellow Corey Calabrese is part of a team that is working with Queens District Attorney Richard Brown to discuss ways his office can improve their anti-human trafficking efforts.

Participation: International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) Conference. From May 5-9, Women and Justice Fellow Corey Calabrese participated in an international conference in Arusha, Tanzania for women judges. She connected with judges from around the world to tell them about the judicial request program and presented to a group of North American judges about the Center’s work.

Mentoring of High School Girls on Combatting Bullying and Harassment. Ms. Calabrese is part of a coalition that hosts conferences and mentors high school girls on anti-bullying efforts to combat the targeting of young women and their sexuality.
IV. Who We Are

A. Center Staff and Faculty

Elizabeth Brundige, Executive Director

Elizabeth Brundige is the Executive Director of the Avon Global Center and Assistant Clinical Professor at Cornell Law School, where she also directs the law school’s new Global Gender Justice Clinic. Prior to joining Cornell Law School, Ms. Brundige was the Robert M. Cover - Allard K. Lowenstein Fellow in International Human Rights and a clinical lecturer in law at Yale Law School, where she co-taught the Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, taught an undergraduate human rights course, and helped coordinate the activities of the Orville H. Schell, Jr. Center for International Human Rights. She previously worked for the International Association of Women Judges, under the auspices of Yale Law School’s Robert L. Bernstein Fellowship in International Human Rights, on programs designed to advance women’s human rights and access to justice in southern and East Africa. She was also an Associate Legal Officer at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and a law clerk for Judge Kermit V. Lipez of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit and Justice Sandile Ngcobo of the Constitutional Court of South Africa. She received a J.D. from Yale Law School, an M.Phil. in Development Studies from Oxford University, and a B.A. from Yale University.

Corey Calabrese, Women and Justice Fellow

Corey Calabrese is a Women and Justice Fellow at the Avon Global Center for Women and Justice at Cornell Law School. Before joining the Center, she was a Program Officer working on human trafficking and sexual violence at the international women’s rights organization, Equality Now, in both their New York and Nairobi offices. She was also previously a Program Manager at the Center for Court Innovation. She received her J.D. from Fordham University School of Law in 2010, where she was both a Crowley Scholar for Human Rights and Stein Scholar for Public Interest Law and Ethics, and her B.A. from the University of Notre Dame in 2006.
Naureen Shameem, Women and Justice Fellow

Naureen Shameem is a Women and Justice Fellow at the Avon Global Center for Women and Justice at Cornell Law School. Naureen received an LL.M. from Harvard Law School, where she participated in the International Human Rights clinic and served as an articles editor for the Harvard International Law Journal, and an LL.B. from University College London. She was previously the Harvard Law Public Service Fellow at the international women’s rights organization Women Living Under Muslim Laws, where she coordinated the global Stop Stoning Women campaign, and a legal researcher for the International Labor Organization. Naureen worked with INTERIGHTS on women’s human rights and with the Human Dignity Trust on strategic litigation. She has interned at Human Rights Watch’s Legal and Policy division and was a refugee caseworker with the Women in Crisis unit at the British Red Cross.

Christina Price, Program Assistant

As the Program Assistant for the Avon Global Center for Women and Justice, Christina Price assists with many aspects of program support and coordination. Prior to joining the Avon Global Center, Christina earned a bachelor's degree in Music Industry and Business Communications from the State University of New York, College at Oneonta in 2011. In the past, she has worked in the higher education field, assisting students, faculty, and more importantly planning and coordinating several events for several diverse departments. Christina is originally from the Ithaca area, living here for most of her life. She is very excited to join the Avon Global Center for Women and Justice, and to join other women and organizations around the world to stand together to support women’s justice.
B. Steering Committee Members

Kim K. Azzarelli, Chair
Steering Committee Chair; Founding Partner, Seneca Point Global

Professor Sandra Babcock
Clinical Professor of Law, Cornell Law School

Professor Cynthia Grant Bowman
Dorothea S. Clarke Professor of Law, Cornell Law School

Dr. Ebby Elahi
Director, Global Health and International Programming, Virtue Foundation; Associate Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology and Preventative Medicine and Global Health, Mount Sinai School of Medicine; Attending Physician, Beth Israel Medical Center and Elmhurst General Hospital

Honorable Elena Highton-Nolasco
Vice President, Supreme Court, Argentina

Professor Barbara J. Holden-Smith
Vice Dean and Professor of Law, Cornell Law School

Professor Sital Kalantry
Clinical Professor of Law, Cornell Law School

Carol Kurzig
President, Avon Foundation for Women

Professor Muna Ndulo
Professor of Law, Cornell Law School and Director, Cornell University’s Institute for African Development

Honorable Barbara Rothstein
U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington

Honorable Joanna Seybert
U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York

Erica H. Steinberger
Partner (ret.), Latham & Watkins LLP

Honorable Ann Claire Williams
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

Honorable Georgina Wood
Chief Justice, Supreme Court, Ghana