

**Communicating Change: Learning from
Women's Rights Activists' Campaigns for Legal
and Policy Change**

Acknowledgements:

Many people contributed to the success of this research project and to the creation of this resource. First, this project would not have been possible without the gracious assistance of research interns, Sophie Thibodeau and Kacey Richards, who eagerly conducted interviews with women's rights activists from around the globe. We thank Meara Jernigan for contributing valuable research time as well. We also would like to acknowledge Tara O'Hanley's kind assistance with data setup and coding. Many thanks also to Sunnee Billingsley for commentary.

Additionally, we extend a warm thanks to AWID for seed grant support, which made this study a reality. The support of Sarah Rosenhek and Lydia Alpizar throughout the research process has been invaluable.

Finally, a warmest thanks to all of the NGOs that have made this project possible through your participation and your truly inspiring work.

February 26, 2009

Report Prepared by: Alexandra Pittman, with assistance from Anna Workman

Data Analysis by: Alexandra Pittman

How Do We Communicate Change?

Project Summary

How do activists communicate the need for legal and policy change through their campaigns for women's equal rights? What are some strategies for effective communication of campaign goals? The aim of this resource is to answer these questions by analyzing activists' experiences in campaigning for women's equal rights. This study was inspired by the successes of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) International Forum in 2005. The Forum brought together over 1,800 activists, academics and funders from around the globe to pool their existing knowledge and to deepen their understanding of social transformation to advance women's rights.

The Global Strategies for Change (GSC) Project was conducted from May 2006 to May 2008 with the support of an AWID Forum seed grant. This resource is based on the data we collected and analyzed from a sample of 70 women's rights campaigns from around the globe. Only campaigns for women's rights that intended to achieve either legislative or policy change at the local, national, or international levels were included in the sample. We did not include campaigns that only serve an educational or awareness-raising purpose. The data were derived from activists that completed an online survey data in English, Spanish, or French in 2006-2007 and the 2004 AWID call for case studies. In 2008, GSC project researchers conducted in-depth follow up telephone interviews with activists.

This resource report is organized around three major topics. First, we are interested in gaining an understanding of the major trends in how women's rights activists are going about communicating their goals of legislative and policy reform in the public sphere. We pay particular attention to the way that activists have "framed" and communicated social, political, legal, and economic issues in order to improve women's rights. Frames are used in social movements to highlight and give meaning to particular events, behaviors, or issues, while backgrounding others. Framing aims to identify the social or political problem or issue at stake, mobilize constituents for change, and may also include suggestions for action.¹ By focusing on the way that issues are framed, we are able to better understand the particular ideological undercurrents of the campaign. Moreover, we are also able to identify important persuasive techniques for broadening public and official support for women's rights campaigns.

Second, we are interested in exploring the complexity involved in communicating change in campaigns. We do this by more deeply exploring three major campaign themes: economic rights and autonomy, health and violence against women, and political participation and human rights frameworks. Specifically, we explore how framing differs depending on the broad goals of specific campaigns. In order to bring out the rich strategies that activists use in the Global North and Global South, brief case studies are presented.

¹ See Bill Gamson. 1992. *Talking Politics*. Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press.

Third, the resource concludes with lessons learned from activists' experiences and highlights resources for further campaign development. Particular focus is placed on the successful assessment of the environment, which includes analysis of organizational, political, social, and economic opportunities and constraints, leveraging historical and social conditions, bringing together multiple discourses, and using innovative or surprising communication tactics.

This resource report fills an important gap in the resources and toolkits available on women's organizing. While there are many excellent activist resources and toolkits available that provide information on campaign planning and implementation, we have not yet identified a single resource that focuses on how women's rights campaigns are framed and how campaign messages are communicated in different contexts, using activists' campaign experiences. Although women's rights activists around the world are operating in different contexts, their campaigns often address common cultural, social, and economic challenges. This resource will enable activists to learn from one another's experiences of framing particular issues and gain insight into the advantages, constraints and risks attached to using particular frames and campaign messages. In addition, since effective framing is often a critical component of campaign success that requires the identification of key audiences and thoughtful consideration of different frames and their possible effects, this resource will provide valuable support to those activists eager to invest in this process.

How Do We Frame the Need for Social Change?

Campaign frames are crafted by activists in order to contextualize important campaign issues and position them in a social or cultural framework for the purpose of broadening a public support base and suggesting alternative modes of action.² For example, in a campaign that focuses on eradicating discrimination in inheritance laws, activists may use a 'women's rights are human rights' frame, which establishes the legitimacy of their claim by invoking widely recognized international human rights conventions designed to protect women from economic discrimination; while activists focusing on family law reform in the Middle East may frame their claims for legal change using a combination of religious, democratic, and constitutional principles in order to more effectively locate the reform effort within a national perspective.

Analyzing both the perspectives of key audiences (those groups whose support activists wish to gain) and opponents to social change is critical. This constituent analysis enables the strategic development of frames which can be linked to particular audiences, making them more persuasive. In campaigns for women's rights, frames can often be used to challenge dominant conceptualizations of gender through in-depth analysis and transformation of the opposition's discourse. By challenging dominant conceptualizations of gender through framing, women's rights activists are sometimes

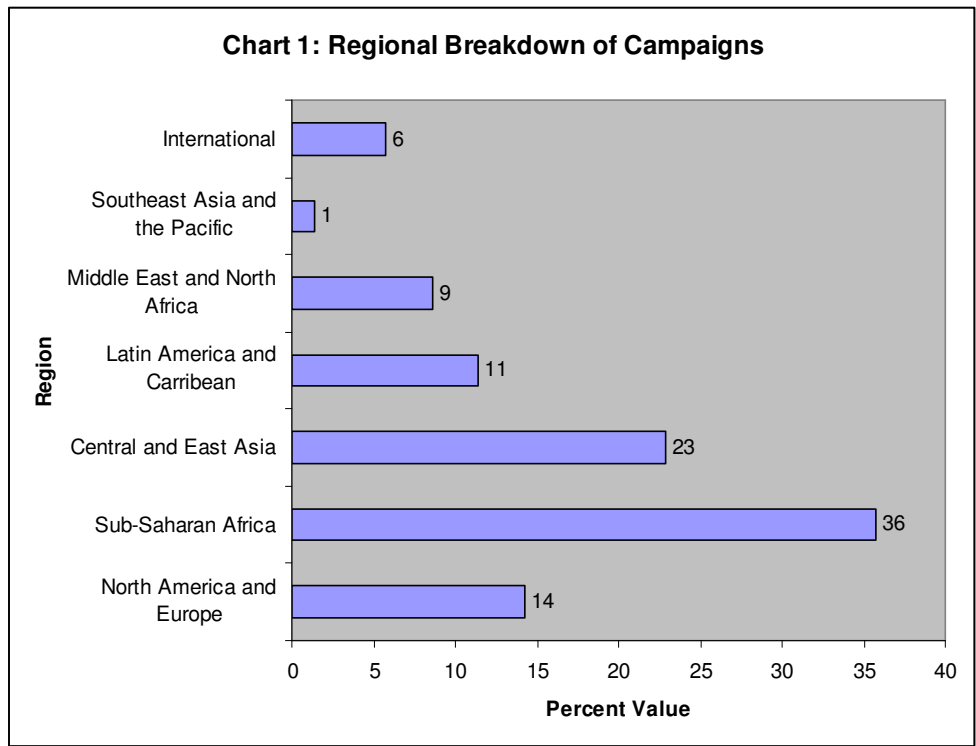
² For more information on frames and framing strategies, see Charlotte Ryan and William Gamson, 2006. "The Art of Reframing Political Debates." *Contexts*, Volume 5, Issue 1, pp. 13-18. and Zald, Mayer N. 1996. "Culture, Ideology and Strategic Framing." pp. 261-274 in D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy, and M. N. Zald, Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

able to influence mainstream thinking on particular issues by re-framing and re-claiming issues traditionally dominated by ideological opponents.

The most successful frames are connected to broader campaign organizing and communication strategies. Frames can be communicated through campaign messages and can produce varied and sometimes multiple results—they may raise awareness, persuade, create connections between formerly distinct issues, and mobilize action for a cause. For example, women’s rights activists might create campaign messages intended to raise awareness of the rights included in a human rights agreement, to persuade the public of the importance of human rights, to situate domestic violence as a human rights issue, or to motivate women to claim their human rights. Women’s rights activists’ use of framing strategies in movement building can be a particularly useful way to build the political power and influence of a campaign.

1. The Global Trends in Communicating Change

In total, this activist resource draws on data from 70 campaigns implemented by 64 organizations in the Global North and South. The majority of the cases were implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa (n=25). Other regions that were well represented in this study include Central and East Asia (n=16), and North America and Western Europe (n=16), followed by Latin America (n=8), the Middle East and North Africa (n=6), International (n=4), and Southeast Asia and the Pacific, (n=1). See Chart 1 below for regional breakdown.



Base=70.

Of all of the campaigns, 61% were implemented on the national level, 19% were regional (supra-national), and 27 % on the international level.

Three ‘master’ themes emerged from the data in the coding process.³

- **Economic rights and autonomy:** This category brings together campaigns that address women’s rights in economic life and women’s connected but broader capacity to make autonomous decisions.
- **Health and violence against women:** This category includes campaigns related to the health and well-being of women, including reproductive health and violence against women.
- **Political participation and human rights frameworks:** This category focuses on campaigns related to women’s power, status, and voice as evidenced in the political sphere and as related to human rights.

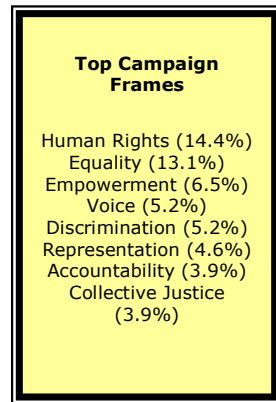
Almost half, 47.1%, of the campaigns in the study focused on health and violence against women issues. Political participation and human rights frameworks were the focus of 32.9% of the campaigns, while the remaining 20 % of campaigns covered economic rights and autonomy issues. For a graphical depiction of the campaigns, see <http://www.batchgeocode.com/map/?i=a2289de8f1143b1f2b950c7f4f7cb0b6>.

Table 1: Campaign Theme by Region

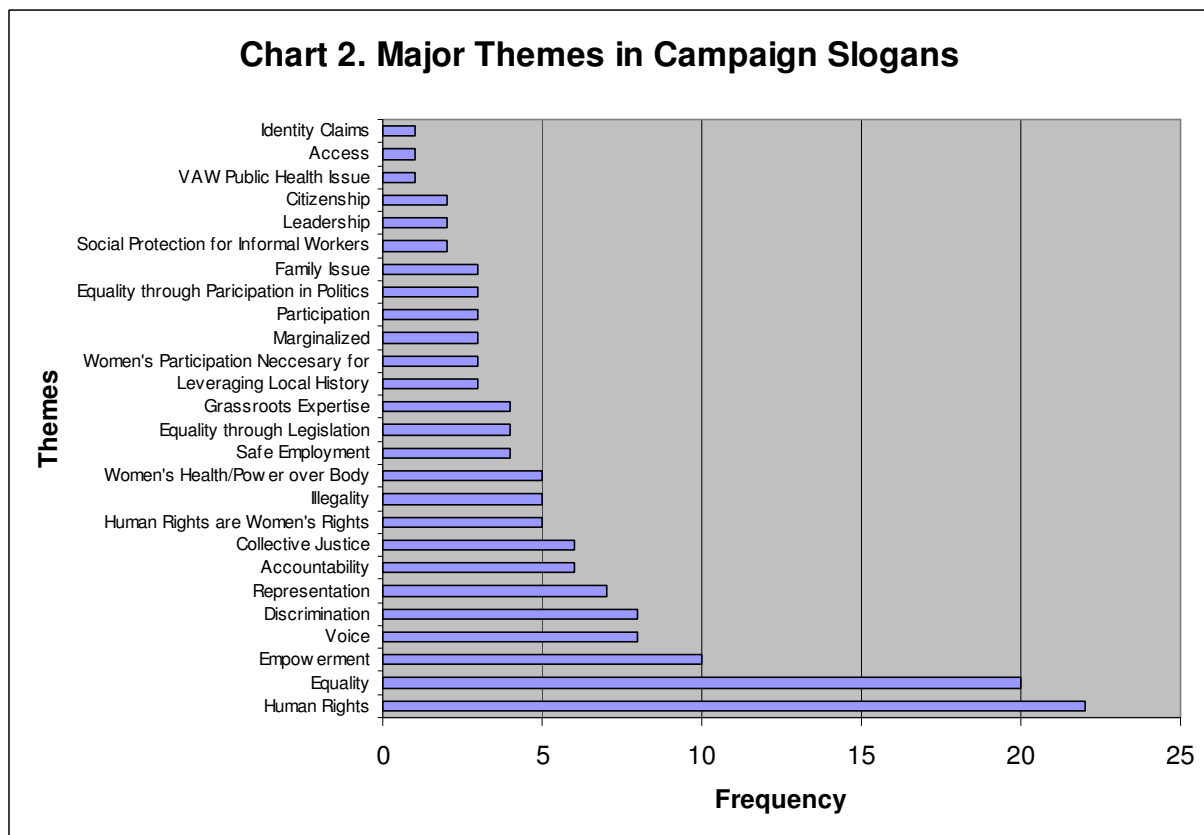
Region	Theme of Campaign			Total
	Economic Rights and Autonomy	Health and Violence Against Women	Political Participation and Human Rights Frameworks	
North America and Europe	3	5	2	10
Sub-Saharan Africa	4	14	7	25
Central and East Asia	5	6	5	16
Latin America and Caribbean	2	3	3	8
Middle East and North Africa	0	0	6	6
Southeast Asia and the Pacific	0	1	0	1
International	0	4	0	4
Total	14	33	23	70

³ Data was content coded and transformed for analysis in spss and excel.

What Can We Learn from Activists About Framing Campaigns?



In what ways have activists framed their calls for legislative and policy reform in the public sphere? This section highlights the broad range of strategies that activists are employing to bring about social and legal change. In addition to analyzing data according to the three overarching themes, we analyzed the data for key frames and framing strategies. The frames were derived from a content analysis of the data.⁴ In all, 25 major themes emerged from the data. There was a wide range of framing themes mentioned in women’s rights campaign that included calls for acknowledging the human rights of women to ensuring indigenous peoples’ representation in politics and society. Major framing themes are depicted in Chart 2 below.



Base=70

Across the campaigns in this study, the most common frames that were mentioned include: human rights, equality, empowerment, voice, and discrimination.⁵ However, even though broad discursive similarities exist, there was great variation in how these

⁴ Here is an example of how the data was coded. Take a campaign that aimed to eliminate discrimination against women in the labor force. An organization decided to speak about discrimination in the workplace as a violation of women’s human rights. In this case, we would code this campaign as drawing upon both ‘discrimination’ and ‘women’s rights and human rights’ frames. In the coding process, frames were not mutually exclusive, meaning that campaigns could be coded as utilizing more than one frame.

⁵ For a complete list of all themes with frequency and percentage values, see Appendix 1.

discourses were adapted to specific campaign contexts. That is, activists across the globe may share similar feminist aspirations, but operationalize them very differently.⁶ The way in which feminist activists adapted the human rights frame to the local setting is explored below.

The Malleability of Human Rights

Human rights discourse is used in very different ways across contexts. For example, human rights discourse can be used to advocate for strengthening of the international human rights machinery that protects women's rights and status, to reshape national debates about women's participation in political life, or to underpin lawsuits in order to protect women's reproductive rights.

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRRAWAP), in Malaysia communicated the necessity of human rights legislation in their national campaign to implement the Optional Protocol for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (OP-CEDAW). The campaign was directed at government officials, women activists, and the broader public. The claim-based slogan "Our Rights are Not Optional" aligns with a rights-based activism framework and discourse.

IWRRAWAP claims that "equality and non-discrimination can be made a reality in women's lives by creating access to justice at the national and international levels through the use of OP-CEDAW. Activists chose this slogan to show the government and women's activists alike that the claiming of rights of equality and non-discrimination is a necessity and that women's rights are indeed basic human rights, which must be achieved."

In comparison, the Association of War Affected Women in Sri Lanka (AWAWSL) focused on a "right to life" perspective. The NGO's goal was to ensure that UN Resolution 1325⁷ was fully implemented and to guarantee women's participation in the peace negotiation process. AWAWSL wanted to build broader public support for peace in the country. They mobilized women who had experienced the loss or disablement of their children or husbands in the war. They drew primarily from framing strategies that highlighted a mother's perspective and her family's right to life through slogans, such as, "Right to life is right of all."

Human rights language was also used in order to draw out the implications on women's reproductive health. The Center for Reproductive Rights, United States, brought a case before the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) regarding a young Peruvian woman, whose reproductive rights were violated by the Peruvian government when they prevented her from getting a legal abortion.

⁶ The concept of collective feminist aspirations, but culturally specific applications and implementations has been explored in depth by Mahnaz Afkhami. April 2008. Women's Learning Partnership Transnational Meeting. Potomac, MD.

⁷ "Resolution 1325 calls for the participation of women in peace processes, gender training in peacekeeping operations, protection of women and girls and respect for their rights, gender mainstreaming in the reporting and implementation systems of the United Nations relating to conflict, peace and security." Source : http://www.womenwarpeace.org/toolbox/fact_sheet_new.pdf

Activists argued that “Denying access to legal abortion violates women's most basic human rights. Our main message was that reproductive rights are rooted in basic human rights principles.”

Global Framing Strategies

In this section, lessons from activists’ experiences in framing campaigns for women’s rights are highlighted.

- **Drawing from narratives or real cases to make reforms relevant.**

Activists often integrate fictional narratives or real-life cases into their campaign messages in an effort to mobilize support. Narratives can help bring complex or seemingly irrelevant campaign issues to life, potentially leading more people to care about the issues at stake and to take action.

Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC), Nigeria, used a powerful narrative in the “Safiya Must Not Die” campaign to stop the stoning of women. Safiya, a Muslim woman, had been sentenced to death by stoning in the sharia courts for adultery. The activists used Safiya’s case to humanize the discriminatory laws, to highlight the need for reform, and to stop the stoning. The Nigerian activists publicized the campaign with a strong media component and communicated messages through public fora such as marketplaces.⁸ Activists visited marketplaces to speak one on one with local women in order to raise awareness of the campaign. The activists wore t-shirts to publicize the cause that included campaign slogans such as, “Stop the Stoning” and “Safiya has the Right to Life.” These shirts had pictures of Safiya holding her child. Moreover, the group passed out posters which explained how stoning was a cultural production, not a religious practice. These framing and communication methods attempted to humanize the issue the stoning in hopes of gathering public support to stop this form of violence against women.

- **Bringing together multiple frames.**

Effective campaigns often bring together multiple frames in order to create targeted messages for specific audiences.

Raising Voices in Uganda highlights the usefulness of multiple frames in their campaign to end violence against women.

“There was not one simple message -- we feel this is not sufficient to change long held beliefs and behaviors in the community. The work was done through a process of 5 phases -- that help facilitate change in the

⁸ The campaign was a success and Safiya was set free. Cultural awareness regarding violence against women and stoning began to spread across Nigeria as a result of the campaign. For more detailed information see, Titilope Salaam. 2007. “Broadening mechanisms of participation/inclusion” in *Building Feminist Movements and Organizations: Learning from Experience*. Zed Books.

community. Each phase has several key messages/ideas. The Raising Voices approach to violence prevention is benefits-based and positive. Based on the language of human rights, we emphasized the benefits for everyone if others' rights are respected. This non-confrontational approach means that people can come on board, that violence isn't a marginal issue; we are not talking only of egregious forms of violence but the subtle and not-so-subtle inequities in our relationships.”

Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc participated in a coalition with Tunisian and Algerian activists where they crafted a variety of framing strategies to argue for the necessity of Islamic Family Law (also called Personal Status Code) reform. The coalition addressed the following topics in *The Guide to Equality in the Family in the Maghreb*: abolition of the duty to obey, ban on polygamy, raising the legal age of marriage, sharing the obligation to support the family equality in the dissolution of marriage, freedom to choose a spouse, sharing parental responsibility, awarding the house to the custodial parent, a divorced mother's right to remarry, and equal inheritance rights. They created arguments based on sociological, human rights, religious, and national realities.

Sample Sociological Arguments:

1. The average age of marriage for Moroccan women is 26.6 as of 1997.
2. Only 8% of girls are married from 15-18.

Multiple levels of argumentation offered activists the opportunity to weave together multiple strands of argumentation to make their arguments more resonant in the face of resistance. These adaptations to discourses and the bridging of different ideologies can be more persuasive than a single frame alone and particularly those that are not adapted to each unique context.

- **Breaking the silence and empowering marginalized populations.**

In Uganda, Perfect Media Promotions ran a campaign to advocate for increased access and care for people living with HIV/AIDS. In this case, the NGO focused on amplifying the voices of people living with AIDS. The aim was to fight stigma and increase the scale and effectiveness of HIV/AIDS care and support. The NGO helped give stakeholders a public platform to highlight the discriminations and challenges they faced through presentations, such as talk shows, documentaries, and testimonies.

- **Highlighting the necessity of public accountability.**

The Young Women's Leadership Institute in Kenya highlighted the importance of public and official accountability in their campaign to pass the Sexual Offences Act. The activists wanted to ensure the enactment of the law so women and girls who had been sexually violated would have access to the justice system. The NGO's slogan was “Women of Kenya are watching you.”

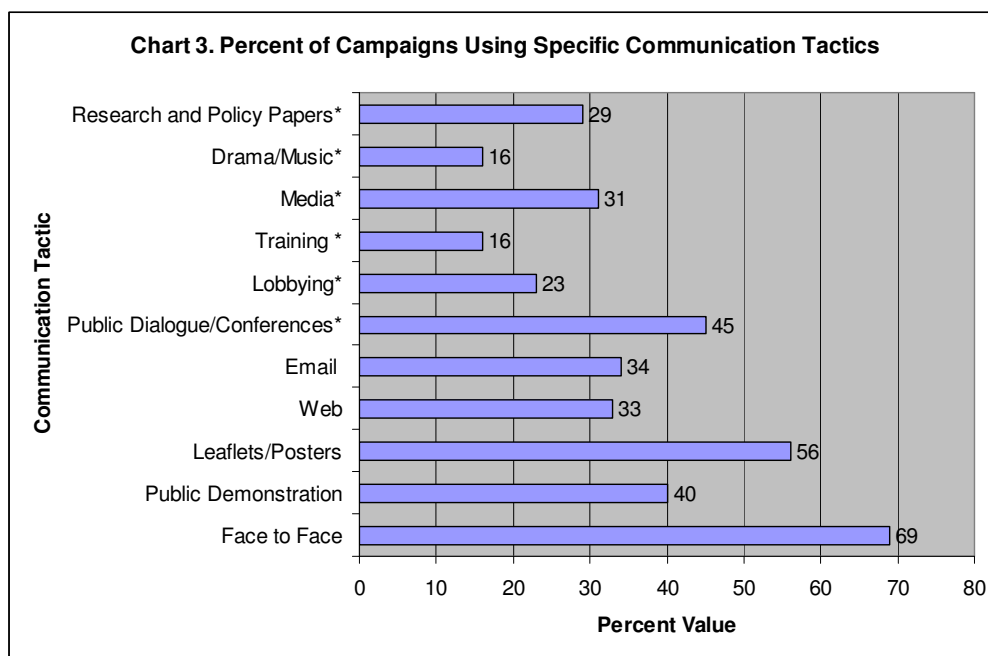
- **Leveraging local histories and linking them to women's rights goals.**

In the case of Algerian family law reform, in 2004 activists utilized the slogan “Twenty years is enough” (20 ans barakat!). This slogan referenced the passing of the 1984

family code, which feminists and reformists opposed due to inherent discriminations against women. Additionally, the word barakat (enough) had been used during Algeria’s Independence war (1954-1962) from France: At the end of the nationalist movement, Algerians began fighting amongst themselves and people began to call “Seven years is enough” (barakat). The feminist activists leveraged this historical reference in an attempt to reclaim women’s rights and inspire the public to join the new fight for national freedom in terms of gender equality.⁹

Strategies for Communicating Changes and Redressing Inequalities

The study results show that face-to-face organizing, leafleting, public dialogues and conferences and public demonstrations are all primary means of women’s rights organizing in this sample.



* Results calculated with a base of 32 respondents. All other responses have a base of 70.

Other communication strategies that were differentially employed, but nonetheless important, were using the media (31%), such as raising awareness through television, radio programs, and newspapers; information technology (33-34%), such as email and the web; research and policy papers (29%); lobbying (23%); drama and music (16%), through the creation of educational theatrical events, such as Theatre of the Oppressed,¹⁰ or through the creation of songs to raise awareness of violence against women; and training events (16%).

⁹ For further information on the Algerian case, see Brac de la Périère, Caroline. 2007. “Remobilizing the women’s movement in Algeria around the barakat (twenty years is enough) campaign.” In *Building Feminist Movements and Organizations: Lessons from Diverse Experiences* (ed. Payne, N.), London, UK: Zed Books.

¹⁰ Theatre of the Oppressed was developed by Augusto Boal and was derived from the public education work of Paulo Freire. They use theater as a means to engage the audience in analysis, construction, and deconstruction of issues of social and relational importance. The display characters being oppressed in different ways, such as a women being harassed on the street and the audience can stop the play and give feedback for other ways of interacting or different outcomes. It is a participatory method for active consciousness-raising.

Other useful and creative tactics not captured by the survey are detailed below.

- **Leveraging new technology.**

Collective for Research Training on Development - Action (CRTDA), Lebanon has been utilizing social networking tools such as Facebook for the dissemination and recruitment in the “Arab Women’s Right to Nationality” campaign. The Lebanese outreach strategy has been to target interested youth. As of August 2008, the nationality campaign Facebook group has over 8,000 members. CRTDA keeps them regularly updated on political developments, petitions, media spots, and mobilization events that they can participate in.

- **Communicating through litigation.**

The Center for Reproductive Rights in NYC believes that courts can provide important venues for advancing women’s rights. “By filing a reproductive rights case before the UNHRC, we wanted to demonstrate how a litigation strategy can be an effective tool for promoting standards for the protection of reproductive rights and seeking redress for violations of those rights.”

- **Depicting your message.**

Marche Mondiale launched a campaign where they created a Global Charter for Humanity for women’s equality. The Charter outlines a vision of a world that is based on equality, freedom, peace, and justice. The international solidarity movement, with members worldwide, held a global relay from March 8 to October 17, 2005 where they passed the Charter on to different women’s organizations across the world. Each organization then organized public actions and awareness activities that symbolized the Charter’s vision. In each country the Charter is passed, local organizations created a square that was included in a global solidarity quilt.

2. The Thematic Results of Communicating Change

What type of language are women’s rights groups using to persuade stakeholders of the need for change in economic, social, political, and legislative rights and polices? The following sections highlight the specific language and innovative communication strategies used within economic rights and autonomy, health and violence against women, and political participation and human rights frameworks campaigns.

Economic Rights and Autonomy (ERA)

How do Campaigns of ERA Frame Issues of Increased Rights?

There were four main sub-themes that emerged from the sample of campaign cases:

1. **Women workers’ rights:** labor conditions, including sexual harassment, social protection, and discrimination against particular categories of workers, such as refugees or sex workers.
2. **Women’s property rights:** inheritance rights and land rights.
3. **Women and family law:** marriage and divorce rights, parental rights, and legal autonomy.
4. **Women and macro-economic policy:** privatization of public services.

In the table below, you will find more detailed descriptions of the ERA campaigns.

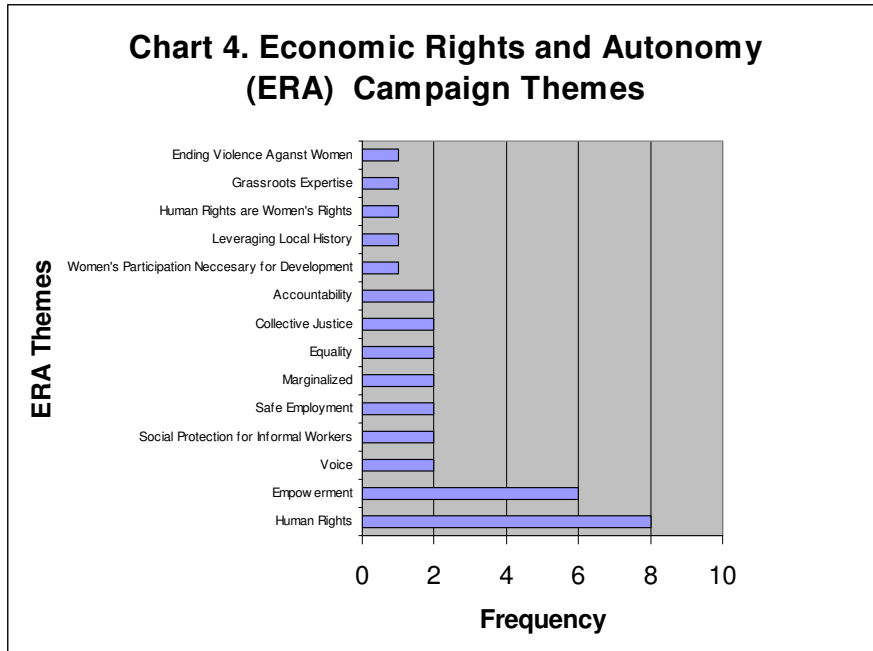
Table 3: Summary of economic rights and autonomy campaigns

Sub-themes	Issues addressed	Frames	Slogans
Women workers’ rights	• Workplace sexual harassment	• Sexual harassment is a form of sexual violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No to sexual harassment: We all have the right to work with dignity and respect.” • “Rights for working women.” • Stop workplace violence.”
	• Social protection for informal workers	• Informal workers have a right to social protection.	• N/A
	• Sex workers’ rights	• Sex work is a labor, human rights and migration issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sex workers of the world unite.” • “Sex work is work.” • “Sex workers’ rights are human rights”.

Sub-themes	Issues addressed	Frames	Slogans
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees' right to secure employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right to secure employment is a human right. • Economic empowerment reduces women refugees' vulnerability to violence and exploitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The right to livelihood is also a human right." • N/A
Women's property rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inheritance rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denial of inheritance rights is a denial of women's human rights. • Inheritance rights for women are crucial to national development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Women's rights are human rights." • "Empower a woman, develop a nation."
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Young people are our strength."
Women and the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform of family code • Legalize rights of partners in consensual unions • Freedom to travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's equality as critical to national development. • N/A • Women are equal to men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "20 years is enough!" • "A democratic Moroccan society depends on the respect of women's rights." • "Partners in consensual unions have rights." • "Equality for women." • "Give women their rights to freedom of movement."
Women and macro-economic policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privatization of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right to water is a basic human right. • Privatization of water and other public services has a disproportionate effect on women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Women's rights are not for sale." • N/A

The most prominent frames that emerge within the ERA theme are human rights (24.2%) and empowerment (18.2%). Human rights were often described in terms of rights to basic levels of sustenance and dignity of existence. They were characterized through the slogans-- "Women's rights are not for sale", "The right to livelihood is also a human right", and "No to sexual harassment: We all have the right to work with dignity and respect".

Other important, but less mentioned themes include: voice; social protection; equality; safe employment, collective justice, accountability; and marginalization.



The following case study illuminates some important themes found within the ERA campaigns. In particular human rights issues are contextualized in terms of sex work. Innovative framing methods used to communicate messages of sex workers' rights and how these messages were spread are of specific focus.

Base=14

Case Study: Campaign for Sex Work, Human Rights, Labor and Migration

The **International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)** has led the Sex Work, Human Rights, Labor and Migration campaign since its founding in 2002 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. This campaign was a response to what some sex workers and their allies viewed as increasingly repressive measures taken by European politicians to reduce the incidence of migration and sex work. Members of the ICRSE, including more than 120 individual sex workers and 80 organizational representatives from over 25 European countries, wanted to change the terms of the public debate about sex work and to ensure the inclusion of their voices in policymaking processes that directly impact on their lives.

The ICRSE articulated the framing of their campaign very explicitly through the development of the “Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto,” researched through a year-long consultation and endorsed by attendees of the ICRSE-organized European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labor and Migration in Brussels in October 2005. The two frames which emerge most powerfully from this document are: i) Sex work is a legitimate form of labor, not a crime or form of sexual abuse; and ii) Sex workers are entitled to human rights, which are frequently violated because of their marginalized social status.

In the Manifesto, these frames form the basis of a series of claims. By positioning sex work as a form of labor like any other, the ICRSE is able to make claims for the inclusion of sex workers in social insurance programs, enforcement of labor law in areas such as health and safety and regulation of working hours, and the right to unionize. By focusing on the human rights of sex workers, the ICRSE invokes empathy for sex workers whose rights have been violated, and provides the basis for claims for redress of these violations.

The ICRSE used two main communication strategies to engage different audiences. First, they held vibrant public demonstrations in order to gain public attention for their cause. They engaged in outreach to mass media to maximize the visibility of this demonstration. At a demonstration in Brussels in 2005 (pictured below), protestors carried red umbrellas, and signs with slogans such as “Sex workers of the world unite!” and “Sex workers rights = human rights.”



These slogans appropriate powerful discourses with long historical legacies—the socialist discourse of worker emancipation and the discourse of international human rights. They also created a symbol of their own—the red umbrella, intended to represent “a symbol of beauty and...resistance to human...attacks.” The umbrella captures the theme of safety/protection, which runs throughout the manifesto, as well as creating a striking visual effect which increases the impact of the public demonstration.

The second communication strategy focused on reaching policymakers. By holding a conference and developing a manifesto, the ICRSE were able to demonstrate their capacity to debate the issues with their constituency and develop a conceptual framework for their campaign. They developed a set of more concise recommendations tailored to policymakers, which they used in their outreach efforts. They were ultimately successful in having these recommendations presented in the European parliament.

These strategies, while distinct, were mutually supporting. The public demonstrations held by the ICRSE provided evidence of committed, collective support for the campaign among European citizens, which may have influenced policymakers in their favor. Similarly, increasing political support is often valuable in recruiting new campaign members, who are motivated by a belief that the campaign has the capacity to succeed.

Health and Violence Against Women (HVAW)

Three main sub-themes have emerged from the cases:

1. **Violence against women (VAW):** human trafficking, female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices, state violence, and domestic violence.
2. **Access to healthcare:** seeking to legislate for expanded health care rights for women or protection of existing rights, including the right to HIV/AIDS treatment.
3. **Reproductive rights:** promoting and defending women's access to contraception, abortion, healthcare information, and safe pregnancy care, as well as the ability to make reproductive healthcare choices without coercion.

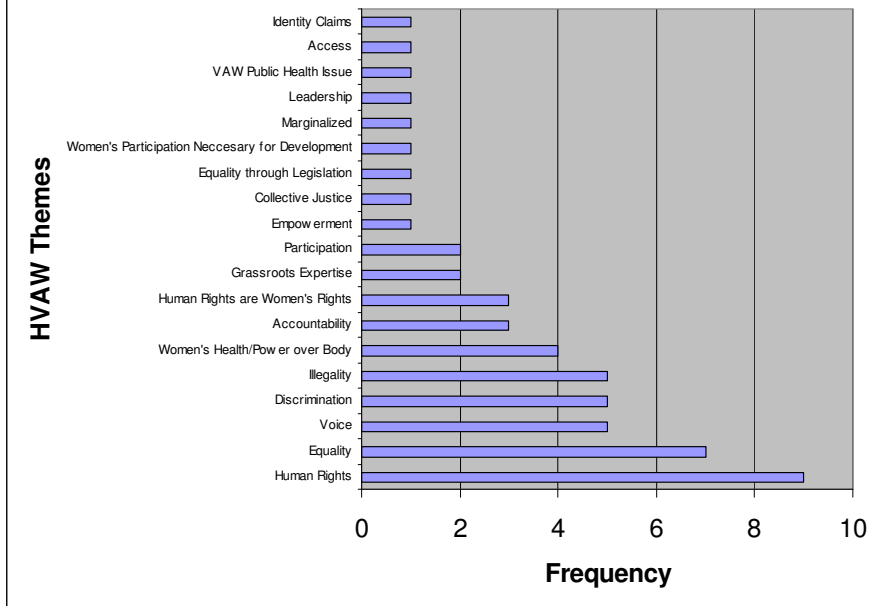
Table 4: Summary of health and violence against women campaigns

Sub-themes	Issues addressed	Frames	Slogans
Violence against Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trafficking of women and girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trafficking of women and children is a crime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Help to stop trafficking, help to build our future.” • “We respect men who respect women.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing public dialogue so as to prevent domestic violence. • End VAW as step towards achieving gender equality. • VAW stunts women’s participation in economies and is the largest human rights violation. • VAW is a serious crime. • Indigenous women against violence. • Stop stoning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Break the silence on domestic violence.” • “Reduce violence against women.” • “Treat us like human beings.” • “Equality now.” • “End the impunity.” • “Stop violence against women and sexual harassment.” • “A woman is not a drum to be beating.” • “Do you see violence against women?” • “Protection measures against VAW do exist.” • “Pledge to never commit VAW.” • “We disrespect those who commit VAW.” • “Men of quality are not afraid of equality.” • “VAW is a violation of human rights.” • “Violence against women requires an integrated analysis.” • “Safiya must not die.” • “Stop the stoning.”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmful traditional practices (HTP) • Female genital mutilation (FGM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public monitoring of FGM and HTP to reduce its prevalence. • FGM is a violation of children's human rights and the (Ethiopian) constitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Stop early marriage.” • “Teaching women is teaching the next generation.” • “Let's stop wife beating; stop HTP.” • Stop FGM!” • “FGM violates basic human rights.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality is necessary for sustainable development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Put women first.” • “Women shine in governance.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice for victims of sexual violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have the right to vote and will not elect leaders unless women's rights are on the agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Women and children of Kenya are watching you!”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of maternal mortality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Be strong and fight for your rights.” • “Remember you are women of tomorrow and you are the mother of the world.”
Access to healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the infrastructure for healthcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care is a human right and should be state-sponsored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Health for all, health for women.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive and sexual care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive rights are rooted in basic human rights principles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease stigma and discrimination of domestic workers living with HIV/AIDS • Including women in initiatives related to HIV/AIDS policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A • Women/affected community members as experts, not external consultants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No stigma and discrimination.” • Support domestic workers in their quest for good health.” • “Women may be the face of AIDS in Africa, but they are also the solution: listen to us.” • “Put HIV prevention in women's hands.” • “Giving women power over AIDS.”
Reproductive rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for access to reproductive rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's right to health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Save abortion to save women's lives.” • “Denying access to legal abortion violates women's most basic human rights.”

The most prominent themes in the HVAW campaigns were human rights (14.3%), equality (11.1%), and voice (7.9%), discrimination (7.9%), and illegality (7.9%).

Chart 5. Health and Violence Against Women (HVAW) Campaign Themes



Base =33

In this category, activists framed VAW and health and reproductive issues, using human rights discourse, paying particular attention to how violence violates these rights. Activists used slogans such as, “Denying access to legal abortion violates women’s most basic human rights” and FGM violates basic human rights.” This focus on violation and on the legality of violence ran throughout the campaigns.

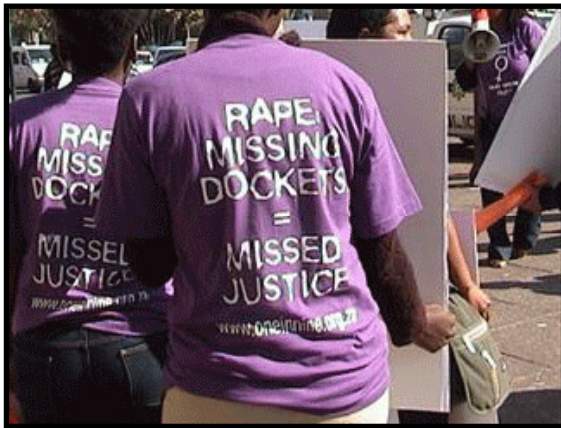
The following case study delves further into the issue of sexual violence and presents evidence of powerful forms of cultural and normative resistance related to women’s sexual rights.

Case Study: The One in Nine Campaign

*In South Africa only one in nine sexual assault cases is reported to police. Women's rights activists from nearly a dozen South African organizations identified two main deterrents to reporting sexual assault: first, a lack of awareness of and solidarity with victims, and second, the absence of a fair system of due process for the victims. Based on these two important areas for improvement, the **One in Nine Campaign** was launched in February 2006 with a two-pronged agenda.*

First, the campaign focused on sensitizing the general public to the prevalence of sexual violence that exists in the country through public mobilizations and demonstrations. The campaign makes the claim that "women and men in South Africa have a responsibility to work towards the eradication of sexual violence, if we are to ensure that all people in the country realize their human rights". Eradicating sexual violence is framed as a fundamental prerequisite to ensuring safe living conditions and the full realization of human rights. In order to communicate their frames and campaign messages, activists involved in One in Nine hold demonstrations in which large masses of women can be seen wearing bright purple shirts and carrying powerful slogans. The activists strategically chose purple as a signature color because of its intense and unique hue, which they perceive as a clear refusal to remain invisible or hidden members of society. Activists communicated campaign messages with slogans, such as "Solidarity with women who speak out!", "Rape missing dockets= missing justice", "Rape of one is a rape of us all" as well as signs declaring, "Not just faces and vaginas", which symbolize their passionate attempts to reclaim ownership of women's bodies. The impact is strong in South Africa, where sexuality is a taboo subject and where such blunt language is strongly against the norm.

The second focus of the One in Nine campaign is to draw attention to the 'secondary victimization' that occurs within the judicial system and the breakdown of due process that exists. 'Secondary victimization' occurs in court proceedings through public humiliation, inappropriate questions about sexual histories,



and attempts made to discredit women's claims. In addition, court records of the women's crime reports often go missing before trial, resulting in the case being dismissed before due process has been realized. Given these institutionalized forms of discrimination, the One in Nine campaign uses a communication strategy to call for policy reform, using real instances of court discrimination targeted toward political officials and members of the criminal justice system.

A particular case that the One in Nine campaign has used to highlight the forms of misconduct and discrimination that occur within the criminal justice system was the case of Buyisiwe—a 27 year old victim who was gang raped in Tembisa in October 2005 by eight men all under the age of twenty. After Buyisiwe underwent a medical and legal examination to verify her account, the men were arrested and held without bail until the case went to trial. On June 12, 2006, however, the matter was dismissed after Buyisiwe's statement and transcripts from the bail application hearing disappeared. Organizers used this case as a representative example in their petition and letter writing campaign and petition to ask for national revision of the policies and practices within the judicial system to ensure that incompetence or corruption related to rape cases be immediately stopped. Activists also used press releases and issued them to the media to intensify the visibility of the cases to be tried in court. By communicating their campaign objectives through Buyisiwe's case, activists effectively personified their issue to the general public while also supporting the victim herself by successfully lobbying that her case be reinstated in 2007. The strategic use of real court cases was an effective way to both educate the public and initiate reform. This bottom-up approach to movement building focused on a very specific set of activities and communication strategies in order to increase solidarity among South Africans and fight for more institutionalized protection for sexual assault victims.

Political Participation and Human Rights Frameworks (PPHRF)

Four main sub-themes emerged from the cases:

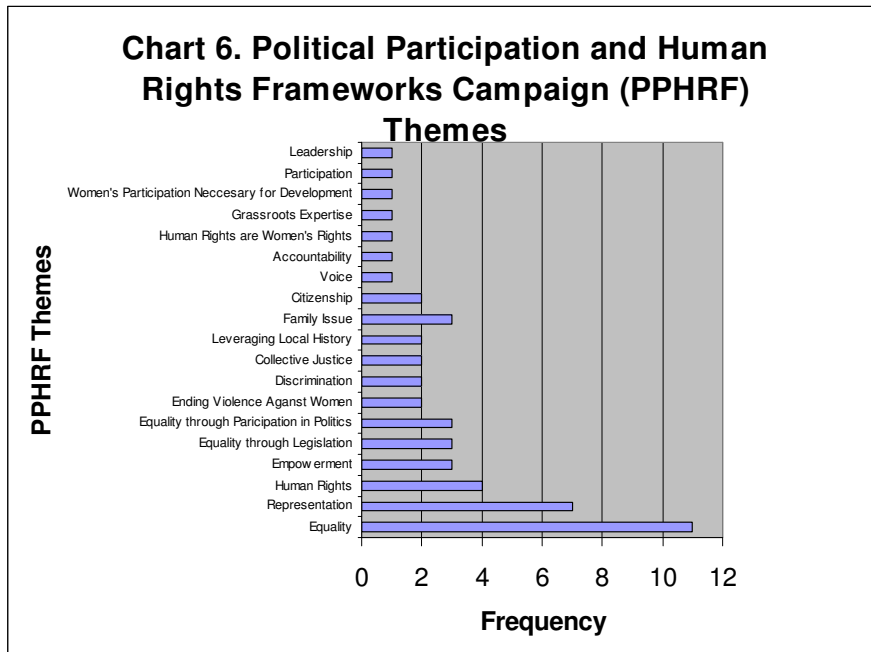
1. **Human rights frameworks:** CEDAW implementation and monitoring and resolution 1325 implementation.
2. **Citizenship and nationality:** women’s equal citizenship and nationality rights.
3. **Political participation:** women’s engagement in global political issues and voter education.
4. **Political representation:** women’s equal representation in positions of political power and political voice.

Table 5: Summary of political participation and human rights framework campaigns

Sub-themes	Issues addressed	Frames	Slogans
Human rights frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination against women: CEDAW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating discrimination against women is essential to the realization of human rights. • Equal women’s rights are the foundation of our society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Eliminate all discrimination against women.” • “Promote women’s leadership: Domesticated CEDAW.” • “Women’s rights are human rights.” • “Our rights are not optional.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s security and participation in peace processes: UN Resolution 1325 implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a women’s right to contribute and participate in peace negotiations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Where are the women at the negotiating table?” • “Right to life is a right of all.” • Stop the war and secure the lives of our children.”
Citizenship and nationality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship and nationality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s nationality and full and equal citizenship is a human right. • Maternal nationality is the right of a child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My nationality is a right for my children.” • “Equality for women.”
Political participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political engagement by voters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global women’s rights are our concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A safer, better world begins with women... it begins with you.”
Political representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global women’s equal political representation • Equal representation of diverse political groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50/50 gender representation in governments across the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Justice through the eyes of women.” • “50 days for 50%.” • “Equal representation.”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political voice of a disenfranchised population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give voice to Palestinian women living inside Israel. • Put Palestinian women's issues on the international map. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
--	---	---	---

The data reveal that the most prominent themes identified in these cases were equality (21.6%), representation (13.7%), human rights (7.8%), empowerment (5.9%), equality.



through legislation (5.9%), and equality through political participation (5.9%). Equality was often discussed in terms of rights to equal participation or power within decision-making bodies, such as being included in processes of peace and conflict resolution in Sri Lanka. Issues of equality also overlapped with representation issues, such as in the 50-50 campaign for equal political representation.

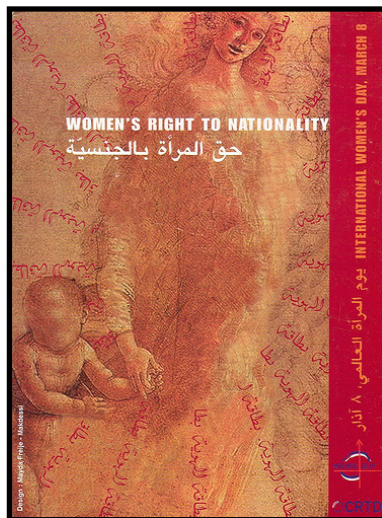
Base=23

Issues of representation and equality are further drawn out in the following case study which explores collective strategy and communication development in a regional campaign to reform nationality laws in the Middle East and North Africa.

Case Study: Framing Citizenship Rights as a Family Issue

Across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Gulf regions, women's rights organizations have joined together to call for equitable nationality laws in the Campaign for Arab Women's Right to Nationality (CAWRN). The goals of the campaign are to reform legislation so that women can pass their own nationality on to their children and husbands, ensure full implementation and access to citizenship laws and ensure women's full and equal participation as citizens in all spheres of their life.

The regional campaign is coordinated by the Lebanese **Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTDA)**. Collectively, CAWRN provides educational resources on discriminatory nationality legislation in MENA and Gulf regions, issues campaign updates, provides real testimonies of the effects of discriminatory nationality laws on women and their families, and disseminates an international petition of support for the activists' campaign efforts. International support amplifies the strength and dissemination of campaign messages and objectives. Individually, campaign partners organize national events for raising public awareness over discriminatory nationality practices and mobilize and lobby support for the reform of nationality codes.



In 2001, the nationality campaign began by gathering regional partners to conduct extensive research on nationality laws, the state constitution, and independent studies. Next, the coalition framed citizenship as a family issue taking into account not only a woman's right to her own nationality and citizenship, but that of her children's as well. The re-framing of women's citizenship as a family issue was a strategic choice to re-locate the discourse around women's citizenship rights into a broader framework that highlights the collective implications of the unequal and discriminatory nationality laws. Framing citizenship in terms of the family is also a strategic way of building public support for the campaign objectives of legislative reform in a way that could be perceived as less threatening to the existing system of gendered relationships.

After establishing the framing mechanisms and the main issues to be addressed in the reforms, CRTDA began reaching out to women married to non-nationals and offered them legal advice to see if nationality laws had personally affected their relationships. If so, activists assisted these women in crafting legal arguments and in preparing cases for couples to challenge the existing laws in court. In addition, CRTDA established a local coalition of women's NGOs in the country, which strengthened the reach of the nationality campaign. Together, the coalition drafted a legal proposal for an amendment to the law that was presented to MPs and followed up with individual lobbying. In their lobbying activities, the organization highlighted the disparities that existed between current nationality laws and men and women's equal citizenship rights as upheld by the state constitution.

In public mobilization efforts, the campaign frame and slogan, "My nationality, a right for me and my family" was publicized during events such as International Women's Day and the Beirut International Marathon. CRTDA also organized a series of public campaign awareness-raising events at local universities in 2006, and sit-ins and protests throughout 2007 and 2008. In tandem with these events, a petition for legislative reform was issued. Finally activists have successfully recruited participants for their public events through innovative social networking tools, such as Facebook.¹¹

¹¹ Data for case study from interviews with Lina Abou-Habib (CRTDA), Vera Hayek (CRTDA), and Rakhee Goyal (WLP).

How Was Communication Similar and Different Between Campaigns?

We found that there were a number of frames that were resonant across the economic rights and autonomy, health and violence against women, and political participation and human rights frameworks campaigns. Among the most prominent frames that activists used were:

- human rights;
- empowerment;
- accountability;
- grassroots expertise;
- and women's participation being necessary for the development of nation.¹²

Even though there were these five shared similarities across the sample, for the most part, campaigns used very distinct framing strategies based on their movement's goals.¹³

- Themes of **marginalization**¹⁴ and **social protection** were highlighted more frequently in campaigns dealing with economic rights and autonomy issues.
- Themes that highlighted **human rights as women's rights, equality**,¹⁵ **discrimination, access, illegality, identity, and participation**¹⁶ appeared more frequently in health and violence against women campaigns.¹⁷
- Themes of **representation, family, equality, participation, and citizenship** were addressed more often in political participation and human rights frameworks campaigns.

¹² See Graphs 2-4 in sections above.

¹³ For full chart comparing the use of themes across cases, see Appendix 2. I have excluded obvious theme distinctions based on the type of campaign where there were significant differences, such as safe employment in ERA campaigns, ending VAW and women's health over body in HVAW campaigns, and equality in participation and legislation for PPHRF campaigns to make the analyses more nuanced.

¹⁴ Marginalization was more frequently seen in campaigns of ERA and HVAW in comparison to PPHRF campaigns.

¹⁵ Equality was more frequently seen in HVAW and PPHRF in comparison to ERA campaigns.

¹⁶ Themes of participation were more frequently seen in HVAW and PPHRF in comparison to ERA.

¹⁷ These findings are statistically significant at the .05 level and have been calculated with an ANOVA test of mean variance, using Least Squares Difference (LSD) means testing.

3. Strategies for Success

Lessons Learned: Effective Strategies for Communicating Change

The purpose of this study has been to identify the ways in which activists have ‘framed’ their campaigns for women’s rights and the strategies used to communicate their chosen ‘frames’ to important audiences. From the 70 cases of women’s activism across the globe, the following successful framing and communication strategies were identified.

Framing

- **Developing an audience analysis.**

Ensuring that you know which specific groups you want to persuade or influence enables you to create a targeted and effective frame and set of campaign messages.

- **Considering opportunities and constraints.**

When you decide to frame your campaign issue a particular way, you create a set of opportunities to change public perceptions and mobilize support, but you also limit other options available to you. It is useful to leverage political opportunities when available and strategize to open up new public spaces when you face constraints.

- **Drawing on social history and powerful symbols.**

Stimulating the historical or symbolic memories of your audience(s) can lend weight to your campaign and increase your power to persuade or influence target audiences.

- **Drawing from narratives or real cases to make reforms relevant.**

Using personal narratives or real cases often humanize legal reform efforts or campaign objectives that can be more persuasive in generating support than words and calls for action alone.

- **Bridging multiple discourses.**

Making discourse relevant to your unique context by drawing from local events, powerful symbolism, social realities, or history is a useful way to communicate your message.

Communication

- **Combining multiple strategies.**

Different audiences may respond to different communication strategies; by combining multiple strategies you increase your reach and may decrease audience fatigue.

- **Remaining adaptable.**

Communication strategies may not have intended effects—don’t lock yourself into a single approach, but learn from audience response.

- **Monitoring opponents.**

Ensure accountability of officials or other stakeholders by monitoring legislation or gender awareness policies.

- **Using creative means to communicate your message.**

Sometimes creative means of expressing your organization's goals, such as using historical imagery, quilts of solidarity, or theatrical tactics, are the most memorable and powerful.

- **Leveraging media opportunities.**

Media channels can be extremely useful for setting the agenda or getting your voices heard in the public arena.

- **Incorporating new media.**

New media, such as social networking tools, internet, and listservs are a valuable addition to the communications toolkit, but are not a magic bullet, and like all media, must be used strategically.

Resources on Campaign Communication Strategies

General Campaign Toolkits

Amnesty International: Campaign Organizing Toolkit.

<http://www.amnesty.org/resources/pdf/campaigning-manual/campaigning-manual.pdf>

Bobo, K., Kendall, J., and Max, S. (2001). Organizing for Social Change. Third Edition. Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press.

Economic Rights and Autonomy

CARAM Asia. Foreign Domestic Workers Campaign Toolkit.

http://www.caramasia.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=537&Itemid=343

Oxfam. Make Trade Fair Toolkit.

<http://www.maketradefair.com/en/index.php?file=04042003094105.htm&cat=1&subcat=14&select=1>

UNIFEM. Claim & Celebrate Women Migrants' Human Rights through CEDAW.

http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=72

Health and Violence against Women

Center for Reproductive Rights: From Rights to Reality Advocacy Resource.

http://www.reproductiverights.org/pdf/pg_rights2reality.pdf

Global AIDS Alliance. 16 days of Activism Gender Violence & World AIDS day Toolkit.

http://www.globalaidsalliance.org/docs/WAD_16_Days_Activist_Toolkit.pdf

Political Participation and Human Rights Frameworks

UNDAW: Women, Nationality, and Citizenship Resource.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/jun03e.pdf>

Millennium Campaign. Millennium Campaign Toolkit.

<http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/pp.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=475517>

Civicus. MDG Campaign Toolkit.

<http://www.civicus.org/mdg/title.html>

Appendix 1. Full Table of Frequency and Percentages of Campaign Frames and Slogans

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Human Rights	22	14.4
Equality	20	13.1
Empowerment	10	6.5
Voice	8	5.2
Discrimination	8	5.2
Representation	7	4.6
Accountability	6	3.9
Collective Justice	6	3.9
Human Rights are Women's Rights	5	3.3
Illegality	5	3.3
Women's Health/Power over Body	5	3.3
Safe Employment	4	2.6
Equality through Legislation	4	2.6
Grassroots Expertise	4	2.6
Leveraging Local History	3	2.0
Women's Participation Necessary for Development	3	2.0
Marginalized	3	2.0
Participation	3	2.0
Equality through Participation in Politics	3	2.0
Family Issue	3	2.0
Social Protection for Informal Workers	2	1.3
Leadership	2	1.3
Citizenship	2	1.3
VAW Public Health Issue	1	0.7
Access	1	0.7
Identity Claims	1	0.7

Appendix 2. Full Table of ERA, HVAW, and PPHRF Theme Frequency and Percentage Values

Frequency of Themes	Type of Campaign					
	ERA		HVAW		PPHRF	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Human Rights	8	24.2	9	14.3	4	7.8
Equality	2	6.1	7	11.1	11	21.6
Empowerment	6	18.2	1	1.6	3	5.9
Voice	2	6.1	5	7.9	1	2.0
Discrimination	0	0.0	5	7.9	2	3.9
Representation	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	13.7
Accountability	2	6.1	3	4.8	1	2.0
Collective Justice	2	6.1	1	1.6	2	3.9
Human Rights are Women's Rights	1	3.0	3	4.8	1	2.0
Illegality	0	0.0	5	7.9	0	0.0
Women's Health/Power over Body	0	0.0	4	6.3	0	0.0
Safe Employment	2	6.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Equality through Legislation	0	0.0	1	1.6	3	5.9
Grassroots Expertise	1	3.0	2	3.2	1	2.0
Leveraging Local History	1	3.0	0	0.0	2	3.9
Women's Participation Necessary for Development	1	3.0	1	1.6	1	2.0
Marginalized	2	6.1	1	1.6	0	0.0
Participation	0	0.0	2	3.2	1	2.0
Equality through Participation in Politics	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	5.9
Family Issue	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	5.9
Social Protection for Informal Workers	2	6.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Leadership	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	2.0
Citizenship	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.9
VAW Public Health Issue	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0
Access	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0
Identity Claims	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0