BAN FGM Worldwide
2010 Female Genital Mutilation Program
**Introduction**

The 2010 No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) Female Genital Mutilation Program focuses on a campaign for the adoption of a United Nations General Assembly Resolution to explicitly ban female genital mutilation (FGM) by the end of the year.

NPWJ is working in collaboration with parliamentarians and women’s rights activists from Africa, Europe and other affected countries, to ensure that they be afforded a real opportunity to contribute to the development of a Resolution text that has a strong political impact at the national level.

To this end, NPWJ will conduct activities (1) in Africa, mobilizing the most committed parliamentarians and activists to involve them in the campaign for the UNGA Resolution, and continuing the engagement with national governments, parliaments and activists to promote the adoption and application of effective laws against FGM at the national level; (2) at the United Nations, working directly with the missions of affected countries (African and others), in order to generate wide political support for a Resolution that bans FGM; and (3) in Italy, to re-launch and support political mobilization at the national level and to give support, visibility and inspiration to the commitment that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has dedicated throughout the years to this issue.

**Program context**

Within the frame of the campaign conducted over the last years, NPWJ has supported the political mobilization of African organizations and activists, including parliamentarians, towards the adoption of national laws prohibiting FGM. Clear and unambiguous national legislation is essential to consolidate a formal and explicit commitment of the State against FGM, by recognizing the practice as a massive and systemic violation of the human rights of women. Legislation can also provide the legal tools to legitimize and facilitate the work of anti-FGM activists and women’s rights groups and protect women and girls willing to challenge the social convention by refusing to undergo FGM, contributing to turning the tide of social conventions and to fighting those cultural norms that reinforce the practice.

Since 2000, NPWJ has organized conferences, seminars, and workshops, promoted public mobilization actions and conducted lobbying and advocacy actions in order to stimulate the political commitment of institutions, authorities, women’s rights activists and communities to promote the adoption of legal measures as positive and long-lasting tool of social progress.

The adoption and the entry into force of the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which enshrines the obligation to adopt national legislation against FGM in article 5; the increasing commitment at the international level shown by affected States and by the international community and growing awareness within African civil society of the value of international instruments to create political openings at the local level all show the timeliness and need to bring the issue to the highest level, bringing all countries in an affirmation and recognition of the necessity to ban FGM. The moment is thus ripe for a campaign to promote a Resolution banning FGM by the United Nations General Assembly.
(I) Activities in Africa

General objective

The objective of NPWJ’s FGM initiatives in Africa is to promote the adoption and effective application of national legislation banning FGM. In 2010, an additional goal is to involve those parliamentarians and activists who have been the most active in fighting FGM in the campaign for the UNGA Resolution, facilitating their contributions and their ability to encourage their Foreign Affairs Ministries and Missions at the UN to commit to the Resolution.

Activities

a. Parliamentary Initiatives

In cooperation with national partner organizations, NPWJ will organize special sessions of parliament or parliamentary workshops, involving also representatives of the government, civil society and women’s rights activists, international NGOs present in the country and United Nations Agencies committed to combat the practice.

The parliamentary initiatives to be implemented in the first semester of 2010 will likely focus on the following countries:
- Mauritania;
- Kenya;
- Guinea-Bissau;
- Uganda.

To reinforce the role of the most engaged activists, NPWJ will, propose the identification of one of the participating parliamentarians as a focal point for the Campaign for the UNGA Resolution to ban FGM, so that there can be one political referent in the country committed to the aims of the campaign who will be able to interact directly with the country’s Mission to the UN in New York.

b. Inter-Parliamentary Seminar in Dakar

The Inter-Parliamentary Seminar in Dakar in May 2010 will bring together parliamentarians who have been most active in the fight against FGM, ministers and ministerial officials engaged in the fight and representatives of regional and sub-regional inter-governmental organizations, such as the African Union, the Pan-African Parliament, ECOWAS and IGAD, as well as the most committed women’s rights activists.

The objective is twofold: to reinforce the informal network of reciprocal support aimed at promoting the coordination of actions and political strategies to adopt or reform national anti-FGM legislation; and to coordinate the campaign in support of a UNGA Resolution to ban FGM. In particular, the Seminar will provide the opportunity to establish coordination among parliamentarians and activists on the content priorities for the Resolution and on the strategies to ensure that Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Missions to the UN in New York take on the priorities that emerge from the Seminar.
(2) Activities at the United Nations

General Objective
The objective of the initiatives in New York is to promote the interests of delegations from key countries and of UN Agencies for the adoption of a Resolution to ban FGM by the United Nations General Assembly.

Activities

a. Advocacy activities
Throughout 2010, NPWJ will conduct a campaign targeting Missions of countries affected by FGM and UN Specialized Agencies (particularly UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNICEF and WHO), involving external interlocutors (women’s rights activists, NGOs, opinion leaders, etc) and sensitizing the international press, through ongoing advocacy and public events aimed at promoting support of the UNGA Resolution banning FGM by the largest number of States.

After the Commission on the Status of Women (see 2.b.i. below), advocacy activities will focus on ensuring there is a good initial draft for the Resolution, one that is concise, politically incisive and that explicitly bans FGM.

Once a draft text reflecting the priorities of parliamentarians and activists in the fight against FGM has been formulated, the text of the Resolution will be promoted by directly lobbying the delegations of the key countries, in coordination with the Italian Mission to the UN. Special attention will be given to the examination of subsequent suggestions regarding text content that will continue to emerge and be sought from member States and Specialized Agencies, in order to ensure that the text maintains its political focus on an explicit ban of FGM.

b. Coordination of the campaign by African activists and parliamentarians
In addition to direct advocacy and visibility initiatives on the Resolution, NPWJ will also collaborate in the coordination of the parliamentarians and the activists mobilized through the initiatives in Africa (see above), so that they can facilitate their respective governments taking a strong stand in favour of the Resolution, by interacting with their Ministries of Foreign Affairs as well as directly with their Missions to the UN.

This element is critical, not only to contribute to countries’ engagement at crucial moments of the negotiation, but especially to ensure that the Missions to the UN be made fully aware of the results of the campaign against FGM in their respective countries, where in the latest years the issue has overcome previously existing taboos and has finally entered in the public political debate.

The activities involving African activists and parliamentarians will be ongoing throughout the year, with three main occasions for greater mobilization and visibility.

i. During the High Level Segment of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2010, in coordination with the Italian Mission to the United Nations, NPWJ will work in close coordination with its network of African NGO, parliamentary and governmental partners to ensure that key States come forward to speak of the need for a UN General Assembly Resolution banning FGM and of the need to guard against the possibility that the
political drive for a Resolution weakens and is replaced by an outcome of minor impact within the CSW itself or in other technical committees;

ii. During the first week of the 65th General Assembly in September 2010, an event will be organized to bring together the First Ladies from those countries affected by the practice in a moment of visibility and support for the Resolution banning FGM (e.g., a breakfast with press conference);

iii. During the debate in the General Assembly itself (and/or in its Third Committee) between September to November 2010, NPWJ will organize a week of mobilization at United Nations Headquarters, to help build consensus of all States for the Resolution. The mobilization will aim at the involvement of one hundred parliamentarians and activists from Africa, those most committed to combating FGM and to the promotion and defence of the rights of women. The event will be designed to have the greatest media impact possible, in order to attract the attention of the public and contribute to reinforcing the engagement of States in supporting the Resolution. It will be accompanied by several parallel activities: press conferences inside and outside the United Nations, meetings between the parliamentarians and activists and the Permanent Representatives at the UN of key countries in the Campaign for a Resolution, events external to the UN, including participation in television and radio broadcasts, presentations and testimonials in schools, universities and other interested institutions.

Three main objectives will guide the involvement of parliamentarians and activists in the Campaign, throughout the year but especially for the event in the Fall of 2010: (a) to benefit from and foster their capacity to interact with their national authorities and directly with their delegations at the UN; (b) to obtain their input and support for the text of the Resolution, ensuring that it has a political profile and that it focuses on a ban of FGM; and (c) to ensure that the advocacy campaign be as inclusive as possible, so that upon the adoption of the Resolution, each of them can claim ownership of this key development in the fight against FGM at the international level, reinforcing their respective campaigns against FGM at the local level.

(3) Activities in Italy

**General Objective**

The objective of the activities in Italy is to involve Italian public opinion in the campaign for a Resolution to ban FGM by the United Nations General Assembly, to re-launch and support political mobilization at national level and to provide support, visibility and inspiration to the commitment of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to bring an end to FGM.

**Activities**

* a. Public information campaign

NPWJ will promote national political mobilization, to bring the attention of Italian public opinion to the campaign. In particular, NPWJ will organize a set of round-tables with parliamentarians, representatives from the government and from civil society, aimed at informing the public on the progress of the campaign, on the commitment of the government and on the position of other member States at the UN. The action at the United Nations (see section 2, above) will be the subject of a specific press campaign in national media (newspaper, radio, television, internet, etc).
b. Partnership campaign with Regional and Local Administrations

NPWJ will be in contact with the local governments (municipalities, provinces and regions) interested in organizing outreach and information initiatives at the local level on the Campaign for a UNGA Resolution banning FGM and on FGM more generally, involving also immigrant communities from the countries where FGM is practiced.

c. Campaign for a Motion of Address and Support to the action of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the United Nations and for a Resolution by the European Parliament

NPWJ will involve all political sides of the Italian Parliament, in order to promote a Motion of Address and Support to the action of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a Resolution banning FGM by the United Nations General Assembly. Additionally, NPWJ will promote a Resolution by the European Parliament calling for action by the UNGA.