

## What the I-VAWA Will Do:

### Increase Legal and Judicial Protection to Address Violence Against Women and Girls

The I-VAWA supports U.S. foreign assistance programs that will back local efforts to establish and enforce laws that prevent and address violence against women and girls and promote efficient, coordinated survivor services. The focus is to support political, legal, and institutional reforms that recognize violence against women and girls as a distinct crime. It will encourage programs to provide personnel training across the legal and judicial sector, including for police, lawyers, corrections officers, court advocates, judges, and judicial officials, about violence against women and girls. The bill would buttress programs to help women and girl victims of violence gain access to the legal system, ensure safety and support throughout the legal process, develop confidential mechanisms for reporting violence, and improve coordination between the health, legal, and other sectors.

### Key Statistics

According to the UN Secretary General's Report on violence against women,

- 102 member states have no specific laws on domestic violence;
- Only 93 states have laws to prevent female trafficking; and
- Only 89 countries have some legislation on domestic violence, and in many cases the implementation of those laws was weak<sup>1</sup>.

### Model Program

#### United States Agency for International Development Women's Legal Rights Initiative (WLRI) - Guatemala and Albania

The Women in Development Program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) conducted a program called the Women's Legal Rights Initiative (WLRI) from 2001 to 2007. The program targeted 10 developing countries in order to promote the legal, civil, property and human rights of women.

<sup>1</sup> Through its programs, WLRI was able to successfully improve legislation to protect women's legal rights, strengthen civil society organizations' capacity to advocate for legal protections for women, and increase public awareness of women's legal rights. <sup>2</sup> Through this program, important advances were made to address the issue of violence against women.

One program by WLRI in Guatemala helped to implement existing laws that protect women from violence. From 2004 to 2006, the WLRI hosted a number of outside legal experts who conducted a series of training activities for 1,500 Guatemalan legal and justice sector professionals. Due to these trainings, local legal and justice professionals were able to educate their peers so that women's legal rights are better upheld and enforced, including in cases of violence against women and girls.<sup>3</sup>

Another case study from WLRI resulted in the creation of Albania's first specific legislation that prohibited domestic violence and provided legal means to protect victims. WLRI partnered with a local non-governmental organization, the Citizen's Advocacy Office (CAO), in order to develop draft legislation. Through a coalition of local non-governmental organizations, CAO was able to collect the 20,000 petition signatures needed in order to request the Parliament to pass a draft bill. Due to WLRI's support, Albania's first comprehensive domestic violence law came into effect on June 1, 2007.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations. *Background documentation for: 61st session of the General Assembly Item 60(a) on advancement of women Secretary-General's study on violence against women*-Forthcoming as document A/61/122/Add. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/violenceagainstwomestudydoc.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/violenceagainstwomestudydoc.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *The Women's Legal Rights Initiative: Final Report* (United States Agency for International Development, 2007) 1.

<sup>2</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *The Women's Legal Rights Initiative: Final Report* (United States Agency for International Development, 2007) 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *The Women's Legal Rights Initiative: Final Report* (United States Agency for International Development, 2007) 37-8.

<sup>4</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *The Women's Legal Rights Initiative: Final Report* (United States Agency for International Development, 2007) 8-10.