

INTERNS BRIEF AMBASSADORS ON THE NEEDS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THEIR COUNTRIES

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Washington, D.C., November 10, 2005: Advocacy Project interns met here last week with senior diplomats from countries where they worked in the summer, including Afghanistan, Nigeria, Italy, Guatemala, Uganda and the Czech Republic.

The meeting took place at AP's second annual Ambassadors' Reception, which is hosted by Her Excellency Claudia Fritsche, the Ambassador of Liechtenstein and an AP Board member.

The reception is intended to round off the internship experience and provide diplomats with a first-hand perspective on the courageous work being done by civil society in their countries. Malia Mayson (Tufts University), who interned with the Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), took the opportunity to discuss WOCON's anti-trafficking work with Dr. U.H. Oriako, Minister of Political Affairs at the Embassy of Nigeria. "I was thrilled to get his views," she said later.

Over the last three years, AP has sent thirty graduate students from eight universities to work in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, Nigeria, Guatemala, Ecuador, Lebanon, Israel/the Palestinian Territories, Brazil, Italy and the Czech Republic.

Civil society faces awesome challenges in most of these countries - a point that was made by several interns. Shirin Sahani (Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service) told His Excellency Said Tayeb Jawad, Ambassador of Afghanistan, about the Omid Learning Center, which is supporting the education of over 1,200 girls in Afghanistan. Ms. Sahani helped Omid to purchase new tents after arsonists burned down one of the Omid schools this summer.

Carrie Hasselback (Wagner School, New York University) also interned in Afghanistan, where she helped the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) to create a new independent women's advocacy commission.

Eun Ha Kim (Georgetown Law School) discussed the problems facing refugees in Uganda with Her Excellency Edith Grace Ssempala, the Ugandan Ambassador in Washington. Over the summer, Ms. Kim interned at the Refugee Law Project, where she help to compile a new study on discrimination against refugees in Kampala. The report was publicized by AP and prompted a reply from the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

During her internship, Margaret Swink (Yale University) edited and coordinated a comparative study on the evictions of Roma minorities in nine European countries. The report will now be used by her host organization, the Prague-based Dzeno Association, to lobby against Roma evictions before the United Nations.

Ewa Sobczynska (Georgetown University, Program in European Studies) used the Ambassadors' Reception to promote her host organization, TAMPEP, which sends out "street units" to counsel trafficked women on the streets of Turin, Italy. AP hopes to organise a speaking tour for TAMPEP's Director in the United States next year - an idea that was supported by Mr. Stefano Stefanini, Chief of Mission at the Italian Embassy.

AP's partners are often critical of their governments, but the diplomats expressed understanding of this. After being briefed by Paula, Mr. Lionel Maza, the Deputy Chief of Staff from the Guatemalan Embassy, said that human rights groups have to do their duty. Paula worked with the community-based association ADIVIMA, a Guatemalan indigenous group which is seeking reparations for massacres in the early 1980s.

Diplomats also praised the program. "It is a wonderful way to interest young people in our country," agreed Ambassador Ssempala, from Uganda.

Evelina Gueorguieva, AP's Internship Coordinator, said that AP received a lot of positive feedback from Ambassadors. "They were all very impressed by the program and the willingness of young Americans to volunteer their time," she said.

AP is now seeking to expand and improve the program by recruiting from universities outside the United States and developing "virtual internships" which allow students to work for their hosts over longer periods of time, before and after their field deployment.

- AP needs funding for the Intern program. Make a [tax-deductible donation](#).