

# GNWS

## Board Meeting - Amsterdam 2011



GLOBAL NETWORK  
OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS



Members of the 2011 GNWS board meeting in Amsterdam

## Welcome to Amsterdam

**IN the last week of March, 2011, a group of 30 women from all corners of the world met for the 2011 GNWS board meeting amidst the sea of bicycles, canals and gorgeous buildings that is Amsterdam.**

### But why Amsterdam?

In New York, at last year's GNWS board meeting, everyone agreed it was high time to meet in a different continent. The First World Conference and the two follow up international board meetings had all been held in North America, not to mention the upcoming Second World Conference, set to roll heads in Washington, DC.

Of all the other continents Europe was a popular choice because of its central location for many of the board members and because of its access to more willing financiers.

Dutch board member Riekje Kok and Danish board member Vibe Klarup Voetmann happened to be sitting next to each other at the time of the decision and agreed to strike up a partnership between countries and together their hand was raised the highest. It was decided that the Amsterdam meet would have a clear goal. According to Riekje the goal was to choose a legal structure for the network with a strong connection to existing regional and national networks.

"And to be able to present the global network in Washington and set membership open to women shelter organisations," she said.



Chair and support team of the 2011 GNWS board meeting

Hosting an event that brings together 20 shelters from 17 countries is very expensive and while the majority of members arranged their own funding, quite a few wouldn't have managed without financial help.

This financial help was taken care of by the Blijf Groep (represented by Aleid van den Brink), the Federatie Opvang (represented by Liesbeth van Bommel) and the Toevluchtsoord (represented by Riekje Kok). Together these three establishments managed to organise eight sponsors who made the event possible.

### Sponsors

- ACCOR Hotels
- American Consulate in Amsterdam
- Cordaid
- Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport
- Municipality of Amsterdam
- Police Program 'Domestic Violence and the police task'
- Stichting het R.C. Maagdenhuis
- Stichting Vrouwen Opvang Nederland (VON)

### A line up of leaders

The Second World Conference of Women's Shelters, being held in Washington DC 2012, has already attracted a very impressive guest list.

[Full story P.2 >](#)



### Three awards for three visionaries

Meet the people who work every day to put an end to Domestic Violence. Three of these people were recognised at our Award Ceremony on Wednesday.

[Full story P.3 >](#)



### In a nutshell

Many items were discussed during the GNWS board meeting and many decisions were made. With the help of Kaofeng Lee's minutes, we prepared a brief summary.

[Full story P.4 >](#)



## Example of a Dutch women's shelter

**TAKING** a break from the busy confines of the conference, the GNWS group ventured out into the sunny weather to visit a Dutch Women's Shelter, Time Out, which is located in Amsterdam and run by the Blijf Groep.

Blijf Groep Director Aleid van den Brink has been involved in women's shelters since 1980, just six years after the first shelter was founded in the Netherlands.

She said the service and the aim has developed considerably in that time. "Seven to 10 years ago the aim was stopping the relationship," Aleid said. "Today we are about stopping violence, that's our first aim, not stopping the relationship."

She said other methods have also been adjusted to suit the times. Online consultation is one exam-

ple. In fact, Aleid said their online chat was launched at the beginning of March, 2011.

But the basics of Dutch Women's Shelters have stayed the same. Initial contact can be otherwise made via the 24 hour help line or at the drop in centre. Cases are then assessed and a plan is developed, and, depending on the specifics of the case, the victim may be lodged in a shelter, into assisted independent housing, given intensive counselling and after care.

Aleid said public interest really grew around 2002, making it easier to gain funding. However, she said funding is still the major headache of the game. "A lot of energy goes towards thinking about funding," she said. "You wouldn't think that of a progressive country like ours."



Blijf Groep Director Aleid van den Brink

# FUNDING: Getting the knack of it

**ISRAELI's Shelter for Battered Women is fortunate to receive two thirds of its annual funding requirement from the government.**

It is fortunate, however, according to Israeli Shelter for Battered Women Director Ruth Ozery, raising the remaining \$(US)250,000 each year is a constant struggle, one that all shelters have to learn to deal with.

"All the time we have to ask for favours, for no charge, or for a discount," she said. "In the beginning that was hard, I felt a little bit terrible from it. But it's for a good cause and I got used to it."

Like most shelters, the Shelter for Battered Women has a few large private funders, which is a blessing. But there is always the looming question of will the funding be renewed? "It is exhausting," she said.

Another headache of relying on funding is that donators may not understand where the money is going.

Ruth said she sometimes feels scrutinized. "It's not like we are spending a lot of money," she said. She gets around this by recording all of what they spend. "I make a report about the money I spend, then I give that to the donators." This can be nice way to thank the donators while keeping them involved.

The shelter doesn't only rely on monetary donations, but also on material donations, like food and also toiletries, nappies, toys and clothes. She said they receive these donations because the shelter is surrounded by good people all willing to help. "Plus we are really known and the community and neighbours really respect us."

Most donated items are second hand and also necessity items. So Ruth is

determined to maintain the pride by also giving the women and children the opportunity to feel special. "It's not nice to use used underwear," she said. "And the weekend is very boring for the women, so all the time I'm raising money to take them out once a month to a movie for example."

occasionally donates tickets. Such a connection helps keep the spirits high – which is, of course, a very special priority.

**"All the time we have to ask for favours, for no charge, or for a discount"**

She said the shelter runs on its connections and one very special connection for the Shelter for Battered Women is the Mayor's wife, who



Member of the GNWS Board; Ruth Ozery [Israel]

## A line up of leaders

**DUBBED as the Olympics of Women's Shelters, the Second World Conference of Women's Shelters has already drawn an impressive guest list.**

People from 95 countries spread over six continents have signed up. People including researchers, international activists, people who work in the shelters, people who answer the phones.

And Washington, DC is excited. National Network To End Domestic Violence Vice President, Cindy Southworth, said the support has been overwhelming.

"We've got phenomenal support from U.S. leaders in ending violence against women" she said. "Not only from President Obama and his wife Michelle but also Vice President Joe Biden." Cindy said Vice President Biden is an important guest because he is the original author of the U.S. Violence Against Women Act.

"We thought long and hard before applying," Cindy said. "Then we looked at our current leaders and decided that this was the time."

She said the hesitation came from the fact that the First World Conference was held in Canada, "but we thought there may never be a better time for the United States to host the event".

Held in 2008, the First World Conference hosted over 800 participants. Cindy said they hope to build on that inaugural success. "We have space for up to 3000," she said, "just in case".

Currently honing in on big sponsors for the event, Cindy said they are working hard to raise funding and it is not for celebrities. "Funding is pri-

marily to bring advocates from low to mid economic countries such as Nepal and Rwanda," she said. "Like the First Conference, we too want to host some inspiring keynote speakers... speakers who can answer questions like how do you keep women safe when your world isn't safe."

**More info:**

The conference goes from February 27 until March 1, 2012. The theme is connect, learn and share.

For more information, or to visit the website, go to [www.worldshelterconference.org](http://www.worldshelterconference.org)

## Federatie Opvang: Partner in The Netherlands

**THE Federation of Shelters (Federatie Opvang) is the branch organisation of all the shelters in the Netherlands, including the women's shelters.**

Throughout the country, organisations of women's shelters offer safe accommodation and support to women and their children who have been the victim of domestic violence, honour-related violence, pimps/child prostitution or human trafficking.

Women who are victims of domestic violence or spousal abuse can stay in a women's shelter temporarily with their children. There, they have access to basic facilities such as emergency care, individual support and counselling programs, support for their children and after-care.

In addition to the basic package of shelter (and ambulant) support and counselling, women's shelter organisations have developed a comprehensive range of specialisations

including accommodation facilities and help for teenage mothers, treatment groups for traumatised victims, 'safe houses' at disclosed locations, shelter and counselling for victims of honour-related violence and shelters for male victims of spousal abuse.

The shelters also provide a broad package of facilities aimed at tackling domestic violence. This package differs per shelter, depending on the agreements made by that particular organisation with municipalities and regional collaborative partners.

The shelters are a principle partner within the chain combating domestic violence and they work closely with partners such as aid organisations and the police.



American GNWS delegation and the Consul and Ambassador of America in the Netherlands



Margaret Augerinos [Australia]

"This year is a very exciting year for us, we have our first female Prime Minister and our first female Governor General, yet we still have to struggle to get funding."



Bandana Rana [Nepal]

"Joining voices of women who run shelters from all around the world is very important to draw attention and sustain it...having the GNWS gives us the platform to support, learn and have a collective voice for the world to focus on."

## Tackling violence with resources

**THE growing interest in combating violence against women can be seen in rising worldwide funding and policy trends. But according to UN Women (previously UNIFEM), there is still something missing.**

UN Women found there was a lack of centralised knowledge on how to fight violence against women; a lack of access to resources. It decided there was a need for a central virtual space that shares what actually works in relation to planning, designing, establishing and running a shelter.

So UN Women requested proposals from violence against women bodies to provide information on several modules, one being: 'Shelters and Safe Spaces for Women and Girls at Risk of or Survivors of Violence' and the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses won the bid.

"We chose to submit a proposal because the work was highly aligned with our shelter practices work here in Canada," Project

Leader Tracy Gierman said. "We are in the midst of a large three year project focused on exchanging knowledge about good practices across our 14 provincial/territorial, regional and aboriginal sheltering associations," she said. During the GNWS board meeting Tracy presented the project to the group and asked for input from members.

"It has been a very positive experience collaborating with the staff at UN Women and reviewing the impressive efforts and how shelters all around the world are making a difference for women, children and their communities."

### More info:

For more information, or to visit the website, go to [www.endvawnow.org](http://www.endvawnow.org).

# Three awards for three visionaries

**THREE honourable Dutch people were recognised during the 2011 GNWS Award Ceremony (held in the centuries old Felix Meritis building) for their hard work towards combating domestic violence.**

The initiative was carried over from the previous board meeting when awards were given to Gabriele Heinisch, Helena Guergis and María del Rocío García Gaytán.

The 2011 award winners were Police Commissioner Mariette Christophe, who received the Policy and Practise award; Verwey Jonker Institute Senior Researcher Katinka Lunneman, who received the Science award; and Utrecht Mayor Aleid Wolfsen, who

determined to fight domestic violence, and after hearing her statistics there is little wonder why.

"Domestic violence is one of our priorities...because every 10 minutes on average a police car is going out to a domestic violence case." She followed this up by saying that 35-40% of the people in Dutch waiting rooms at doctor practices are there because of domestic violence; and 49% of physio therapy cases are domestic violence related.

government involved, this has been achieved by allowing mayors to hand out temporary restraining orders. "We are happy with this because it's important for the government to see how many domestic violence cases there are."

She said they issue restraining orders instead of removing the victims to a safe house, to penalise the perpetrator. "Why should the perpetrator get to stay in the house?"

Mariette also said the police hopes to map the neighbourhoods with the "time bomb" domestic violence cases, but to achieve this they will require help from citizens.

After the absolute success of the Award Ceremony, the Federatie Opgang decided it would take over the initiative by giving out awards every two years to three Dutch activists or professionals to honour them and to give them a sense of achievement that is well and truly deserved.

**"Domestic violence is one of our priorities"**

received the Politics and Governance award. Unfortunately Mayor Wolfsen was unable to accept his award in person because he was caught up by a case that involved a young child who was killed that very morning – a case that was possibly related to the horror that is domestic violence.

Thankfully both of the two ladies were able to attend and present a profile of their work to the board who was left in awe of both women's obvious dedication.

Katinka's presentation was about the risk assessment instrument she developed, which is used by women's shelters and recognised by the police. She gained much appreciation from the crowd and generated many questions.

When Mariette finished presenting the police force's involvement in domestic violence to the GNWS the entire room looked to her in amazement. "Why aren't there more police commissioners like Mariette?"

She was warm, informative and very

"It is a very severe problem," she said.

Mariette spoke about the goals of the special unit put in place for domestic violence. One goal that has already been implemented is getting the local



Tracy Gierman [Canada]



Katinka Lunneman and Mariette Christophe with their Awards

## Reception at American Consulate in Amsterdam

"Good evening everyone. It is my pleasure to join Julie Ruterborries in welcoming you to the U.S. Consulate in Amsterdam," Ambassador Fay Hartog Levin said during Monday evening's reception.

"Earlier this month, the White House issued a report called 'Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being'. This is the first comprehensive government report on American women in nearly 50 years. The last report was issued in 1963 by the Commission on the Status of Women, which was established by President Kennedy and chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. So a new report was long overdue.

"This year's report contains both good news and bad news on the condition of American women today. The good news is that women now make up 51% of the workforce in America and they are earning college degrees at a higher rate than ever before and at a higher rate than men.

"The bad news is that women are still paid just 75 cents for every dollar that men earn and they are more likely than men to be living in poverty. In fact, 28% of unmarried women with children are earning an income below the poverty level. And while the rate of domestic violence has declined significantly in the United States since the passage of the Violence

Against Women Act in 1994, sexual assault and domestic violence continue to disproportionately affect women. So, while we have already come a long way, American women still have a long way to go."



Ambassador Fay Hartog Levin showing her support to STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Nguyen Van Anh [Vietnam]

"Fifty-five percent of Vietnamese women suffer at least one form of domestic violence in their life. I come to the GNWS meetings because I want to learn and experience from other countries."



Mary Balikungeri [Rwanda]

"Our motivation is to ensure that the grassroots organisations like Rwanda Women Community Development Network are connected with the women politician leaders to ensure an increased connection for women's empowerment agenda and gender based violence in our communities."

## Mini cruise with Hedy d'Ancona

Visitors to the Netherlands were spoiled on Tuesday evening with a cruise through the canals that included dinner and an exciting Dutch visitor.

Hedy d'Ancona, a well known Dutch feminist and canvasser of women's liberation, entertained

the GNWS members by telling them about her work. She then turned the microphone over and encouraged those present to say something they were proud of.

This exercise made members remember that beside all the problems they were facing a lot had

been achieved and there was a lot to be proud of.

The cruise was donated to the group by the municipality of Amsterdam as hosting city for the GNWS board.



## The bitter sweet facts of VAW

**ON one fine day  
Violence Against  
Women will be history.  
Today is not that day.**

Until that day comes the GNWS plans on releasing the uplifting and brutal facts side by side in the form of an annual Global Data Count.

The first Global Data Count gathered information from one day in 2009 and it was released in 2010.

The second edition gathered information from one day in 2010 and was released in conjunction with the 2011 GNWS board meeting.

It said that on one day in 2010 57,754 women and 41,900 children were helped by 2,774 participating shelters worldwide. On that very same day shelters were unable to accommodate 11,460 women and 322 children.

The aim of presenting these bitter sweet facts is to open eyes worldwide to the devastating number of women and children across the world who need help, every day.

The 2010 Global Data Count represents sheltering agencies from 30 countries and 2,774 shelters around the world.

# In a nutshell

**PUTTING 30 plus women in one room from all corners of the world with all kinds of different values and strengths can achieve great things when organised well. In the case of the 2011 GNWS board meeting: organisation was great and the results were inspiring.**

The GNWS is made up of three subcommittees: Governance and Structure; Communication and Awareness; and Policy. These groups were asked to present their goals for the next 11 months to the board. All presentations were adopted, below is a summary.

### Governance and Structure

(chair: Pat Vargas)

Currently, the GNWS interim board is composed of 18 founding members. During the next 11 months, the Executive Committee will explore a formalised governance structure that will ensure global representation. The board recognises that GNWS will need to reach out to shelters and networks in Latin America, Africa and Asia; it also recognises that current board members may need to step down so the geographic representation within the board reflects its membership. During the board meeting, the board moved forward with this commitment by approving Margarita Guille with the Inter-American Shelter Network a place on the interim board it also approved the membership of several programs from Latin America. The three subcommittees can be made up of any members (regardless of whether they are on the board). When possible consensus

will be used for ruling decisions, otherwise majority vote, with the chair having the deciding vote.

Until a formal structure is agreed on, the new Executive Committee will be made up of a chair (Sue Else, USA), co-chair (Bandana Rana, Nepal), chairs of the three subcommittees (Pat Vargas, Canada, Maria Stetter, Denmark and Margarita Guille, Mexico). The chair will be held by a member of the country that will host the next world conference, in this case USA. At least two members of the Executive Committee will represent the global south.

There will be a fee attached to membership, however members can request a waiver. Members must agree to and pursue the goals of GNWS. Board members from the same country or region of the applicant will be consulted about the application. The membership approval will be done by the Membership Committee.

### Communication and Awareness

(chair: Maria Stetter)

The Global Data Count will continue to be managed by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, Jan Reimer (if she accepts) will chair this group. Details will be finalised, such as which actual day the data count will be held on. A press

kit for the release of the 2011 Global Data Count will be developed. Details of how to showcase it during the World Conference will be finalised.

The budget and the work plan of the GNWS website will be presented to the board. This group will be in charge of gathering and updating information. The site will be primarily in English, and it will explain that Spanish and French translations will come as resources and volunteers increase.

The Public Relations Working Group will help draft press releases and promote GNWS activities. GNWS has a facebook page, as a form of outreach. The Public Awareness and General Advocacy Working Group will develop policies to govern this among other things.

### Policy

(chair: Margarita Guille)

The policy subcommittee will make a summary of the global shelter presence, to get a sense of the number and types of shelters around the world. They will profile the experience of one or two women from each region and they will explore campaign messages in conjunction with the communication awareness committee.

During the World Conference the

committee will facilitate a presentation that looks at the next steps of lobbying and strategic advocacy.

The next GNWS board meeting will be held in Washington, DC, immediately before the Second World Conference. The Executive Committee will plan the next board meeting. The 2013 board meeting will, ideally, be held outside of North America or Europe. According to the organising committee of the GNWS, the 2011 board meeting was an absolute success. The pleasant mix of work, activities, sight-seeing and relaxation was openly appreciated, giving the organisers a real buzz.

**"Thank you for helping make the meeting so wonderful, we had a great time with you and we are all looking forward to seeing everybody again in 2012!"**



Meeting room in the Maagdenhuis in Amsterdam

## Colophon

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