Annual Report for Vice President for Research

Academic year: 2013 – 2014

Global Institute for Health and Human Rights

Submitted by:

Director, Kamiar Alaei
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Date:

September 1, 2014
1. **Name of Unit**

Global Institute for Health and Human Rights

2. **Name of Director**

Director: Dr. Kamiar Alaei  
Associate Director: Dr. Arash Alaei

3. **Brief Mission Statement**

The Global Institute for Health and Human Rights was officially founded in 2013 by physicians and renowned human rights activists Kamiar Alaei and Arash Alaei with the mission of *generating a deeper understanding of the intersection between health and human rights, and promoting innovative solutions to contemporary challenges in this arena. Through research, education, policy, advocacy and development, the Institute seeks to advance the understanding and protection of health and human rights in a theoretical, academic, practical, and ethical context.*

Believing that health, well-being, and human rights are complex and multi-faceted concepts, the Institute seeks to promote an equally rich and multi-disciplinary approach to the understanding of and solutions to the health and human rights challenges of our contemporary world. Activities of the Institute include: inter-departmental collaborative research; education through the creation of graduate, undergraduate, online and certification courses; participation in policy reform and implementation to work towards universal equal access to health and well-being; advocacy to encourage understanding, protection and promotion of health as a human right; and development projects to promote well-being, including biological health, education, mental health, economic productivity, and social integrity, in target populations.

4. **Unit’s goals and objectives for 2013 – 2014**

The Institute was founded in 2013 and the 2013 – 2014 year was its first full year in existence. As such, the Institute continued to advance many of the goals and objectives contained in the 2012 – 2013 Annual Report.

These general goals and objectives included:

**Research**

- Facilitating research that crosses disciplinary boundaries to demonstrate the important and understudied link between health and human rights.
- Creating fellowship for research areas of interest.
- Publishing articles on topics related to health and human rights.
• Providing field-based opportunities for applied research.

Education

• Working with students at the undergraduate and graduate levels to understand the links between health and human rights.
• Sharing best practices with students at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as with and between faculty members and disciplines.
• Organizing academic courses, lectures, workshops and seminars for students, faculty members and members of the larger community.
• Developing long-distance trainings and workshops on health and human right for other academic institutions and for professionals in fields related to health and human rights.
• Promoting the exchange of information on health and human rights.
• Providing internships for students at international organizations that work with the Institute in health and human rights issues.

Advocacy/Outreach

• Raising awareness for the public and promoting the interest of students and academics to consider and understand the interrelation between the enjoyment of health and the exercise of human rights.
• Strengthening the capacity of major organizations working in the field of health and human rights issues, while benefitting from their expertise.
• Helping to build the capacity of universities in developing countries through program collaboration (e.g., schools of Social Welfare and Public Health joint programs).
• Providing advocacy and support to colleagues under threat due to their work on health and human rights.

Field Work

• Developing projects for harm-reduction and capacity-building to protect health.
• Working directly with affected vulnerable populations to improve their health outcomes.
• Coordinating the delivery of health services to populations in need.
• Using health diplomacy to improve community and international relations.

Interdisciplinary Networking

• Encouraging the development of interdisciplinary and inter-institutional networks to achieve the aforementioned goals in support of our mission to promote a rich and multi-disciplinary approach to the understanding of and solutions to the health and human rights challenges of our contemporary world.
5. **Major Accomplishments for 2013 – 2014**

The Institute has made great progress toward the fulfillment of our goals and objectives during the 2013 – 2014 year. These include:

**Research**

Research grants submitted:

1) Kamiar Alaei (PI), Arash Alaei, Kevin Williams, Kaveh Khoshnood, Michael Waxman, Alexandra Harrington. Mitigating Humanitarian Crisis with Public Health Evidence-Based Lessons, Save the Children ELRHA - R2HC Expression of Interest, £267,627.

2) Kamiar Alaei (PI), Arash Alaei, Dina Refki, Kevin Williams. A Women-Centered Network to Organize, Advocate, Lead Change and Drive Democratic Transformations, USAID/ME projects to support Citizens Capacity and Legal Rights Programs, $1,404,080. Passed first two reviews and is under final review.

3) Arash Alaei (Co-PI), David Rousseu (Co-PI), Kamiar Alaei, Kevin Williams. 2014-2016 Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP) for Iraqi undergraduate students, US Embassy Grants Program, $1,192,165.34

4) Collaboration with Jack A. DeHovitz SUNY Downstate Medical Center for the renewal of his Fogarty HIV Research Training Program, with the proposed renewal to be located in Kazakhstan.

**Education**

- **Proposal for Advanced Certificate Program in International Health and Human Rights**
  To address the growing demand for interdisciplinary solutions to our contemporary world challenges, the Global Institute for Health and Human Rights (GIHHR) in collaboration with the University at Albany School of Public Health (SPH) and the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy Department of Political Science (ROCK) proposed the introduction of a graduate-level Advanced Certificate in International Health and Human Rights to be offered to students and professionals (health care professionals, lawyers, policy makers etc.) in collaboration with 3 other institutions. The proposal has been approved by the Graduate Academic Council, University Planning and Policy Council, and
University Senate. It has been sent on to SUNY Central and the Department of
Education and we hope that it will be approved by the end of 2014.

- **Proposal for “3 in 1” MIA/LL.M./Certificate Program**
The proposed program of Masters of International Affairs (MIA), Masters of Law
(LL.M.), and Advanced Certificate in Health and Human Rights is a two-year
program established by University at Albany and Albany Law School. The dual
degree is ideal for individuals who wish to combine a triple careers in
international affairs, law and health and human rights. The MIA and LL.M. will
include a concentration in Health and Human Rights.

- **Course for Health and Human Rights, currently offered for 2nd/3rd year**
  *TPOS/TSPH 272 Health and Human Rights: an Interdisciplinary Approach*
  Spring, 2013 & Fall 2014 The Honors College, University at Albany, State
  University of New York, Albany, NY

- **Graduate course in Health and Human Rights**
  *RPOS/SSPH 586, RPOS/SSPH 486 Health and Human Rights: an*
  *Interdisciplinary Approach*
  Fall, 2014 Cross-listed/Shared-resource,
  University at Albany, State University of New York, Albany, NY

- **2020 Proposal finalized for the hire of two faculty members & two GAs**
The GIHHR was approved for two full- time junior faculty members to work
in the field of Health and Human Rights. The approved plan is to hire two
faculty members with joint appointments; one hosted by Rockefeller with joint
appointment with SPH with a focus on health and human rights as relates to
politics and policy, and one hosted by SPH with a joint appointment in School
of Criminal Justice with a focus on health and human rights in prisons and
other places of deprivation of liberty. Each would be research intensive, and
would teach two courses per semester on health and human rights (likely
shared-resource grad/undergrad courses).

This hiring plan achieves the two broad aims of NY SUNY 2020 RFP: (1) it
will increase research excellence and external funding in an area of research
through increasing collaborative research efforts with other departments,
schools and colleges at UAlbany, thereby facilitating multidisciplinary
partnerships that is central to initiatives in UAlbany Impact, and (2) it will
provide capacity for increased enrollment at the undergraduate and graduate
levels, while ensuring high quality of education.
• **Internship Program**
  
The Institute’s internship program has become quite successful. During the 2013 – 2014 year, the Institute hosted at least 4 interns from the University at Albany, Albany Medical College and Albany College of Pharmacy.

  During the 2013 – 2014 academic year, the GIHHR hosted 11 volunteer law students from Albany Law School and 1 volunteer law student from Touro Law School. These students worked on two different projects, both of which represent a groundbreaking way of analyzing health and human rights together in terms of vulnerable populations. The first project is a global compendium on health and human rights for prison populations and the second project is a global compendium on health and human rights for indigenous communities and populations. The starting region for analysis is Latin America and the Caribbean. During the summer months, the GIHHR is hosting seven volunteer law students from Albany Law School and Touro Law School. These students are continuing work on both global compendium projects, as well as expanding their work to include research into health, human rights and the environment.

• **International Academic Program (IAP)**
  
In early 2013, President Jones agreed to have his first foreign trip to Turkey to visit 5 Turkish universities and meet with their presidents; the outcome was the signing of 5 MOUs, several dual diploma programs as well as 2+2 programs.

  IAP’s international network also made it possible for UAlbany to begin academic relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. As a result of these partnerships, approximately 120 international students have applied to UAlbany from these countries, which resulted in 32 students from Iran, 10 from Iraq, and 8 from Saudi Arabia being admitted to study at the University at Albany. IAP which was funded $2,500,000 by USAID has helped broaden UAlbany’s international student body and its diversity, and increased the number of international students studying here at the University. These students generated a total of more than $1 million in tuition for the University. At the end of the 2013 – 2014 academic year, 20 undergraduate and graduate students from Iran graduated from SUNY Albany with degrees in several disciplines.

• **Trainings and Lectures**
  
  o **Summer, ’14** The right of people living with HIV/AIDS and drug users to the enjoyment of well-being: a case study from Iran at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

  o **Summer, ’14** Presentation on health and human rights at the University of Oxford Faculty of Law.
o **Summer,’14** Two panel presentations and one poster presentation at the 20th International AIDS Conference in Melbourne, Australia.

o **Spring, ’14** The Cost of Defending Health as a Right for Patients with AIDS: A Case Study from Iran at Yale Department of Internal Medicine Ground Rounds, 4th Annual Global Health Day Lecture.

o **Summer, ’13** Global Challenges facing Children Youth and Families International Conference at Wheelock College in Boston.

o **Summer, ’13** Global Health Essentials training course at Weill Cornell Medical College.

o **Spring, ’13** Pediatric Grand Rounds at Albany Medical College, Continuing Medical Education (CME).

o **Spring, ’13** Internal Medicine Grand Round at Albany Medical College, CME.

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**Advocacy/Outreach**

- **Participation in Community Engagement Fair & Internship Fair, etc.**
  
The Institute was invited to participate in two student outreach fairs this year, and additionally delivered presentation at several student group events.

- **Women in the Middle East Conference**
  
The Global Institute for Health and Human Rights hosted "The Women of the Middle East" conference, from Monday, October 21 to Friday, October 25, 2013 in Albany, New York. It was a week-long conference and cultural program at the University at Albany and Albany Law School.

- **Founding of Students for Health and Human Rights**
  
  A group of University at Albany students this year founded a Student Association group to engage students in issues of health and human rights and beyond. Additionally, both Albany Law School and Touro Law School students have founded chapters of the Society for Health and Human Rights, which will link with the University at Albany student group to engage in inter-disciplinary discussions of health and human rights issues.

- **Workshop with WHO/Pan American Health Organization**
  
  All students working on the U.N. modules and Board of Directors Members came together at the University at Albany in order to collaborate and organize the modules. Students came from different states and countries. This two-day workshop took place on February 2nd-3rd, 2013.
• **Consultant to Guidelines on Human Rights Education for Health Workers Published** (ODIHR)

• **First framework for Health and Human Rights in Prisons**

Dr. Kamiar Alaei has served as an external consultant of the PAHO Human Rights team since 2011. Since then, he provided technical support in the development of a framework to assess and improve health and human rights conditions in prisons using human rights instruments. This framework is under review for publication and is expected to be published shortly.

• **Development of partnerships with various countries in the Middle East**

We have developed significant partnerships with universities, NGOs, and government agencies in countries in the Middle East including Turkey, Iraq and Afghanistan.

We have developed partnerships with:

**Afghanistan**
- HOLD - HOLD is a non-profit organization recognized in Afghanistan
- AABRAR – AABRAR is dedicated to social, civic and economic integration and development in Afghanistan.
- MoPH and ANPHI – Both of these federal level groups in Afghanistan will be keys in developing programs and identifying the current level of training in the two provinces.

**Turkey**
- Istanbul University
- Hacettepe University
- Bahcesehir University
- Istanbul Cultural University
- Afyon University
- Mugla University
- Ett University
- TURMAKS, a humanitarian not for profit with an established history working with refugee women and children and issues concerning gender-based violence and mental health.

**Iraq**
- Civil Society Initiative and PARY NGO for Development and Legal Consultation, both of which have been working campaigning against gender-based violence.
• **Presentations by directors**
  2014  Yale Medical School
  2014  Albany Medical College
  2014  Academy of Iranian American Physicians
  2013  Cornell Medical College
  2013  Boston Medical School
  2013  American Academy of Pediatrics
  2013  Cornell Medical College
  2013  Boston Medical School
  2013  Iranian American Medical Society
  2013  Center for Human Rights, Kennedy School, Harvard University
  2012  United Nation Human Right Council, Geneva
  2012  Annual Meeting, Amnesty International
  2012  Center for Public Health and Human Right at JHU
  2012  Harvard PAIR Conference
  2012  Yale Law School
  2012  Weill Cornell Medical College
  2012  Albany Law School
  2012  SUNY Downstate Medical College
  2012  UMass Worcester Medical School
  2012  Cornell Medical College
  2012  Albany Medical College
  2012  UAlbany School of Public Health

**Field Work**

• **Continued Involvement with The Center for Health and Human Rights Free Health Clinic in Virginia as a pilot; plans are in process to replicate the model in NYC and CA.**

6. **Faculty/Staff Honors and Awards**

As noted in the 2012 – 2013 Annual Report, Drs. Alaei have been awarded several major honors and awards since the founding of the Institute.

  **2015 Ellis Island Medal of Honor by NECO**
for the significant contribution to the society

2013 Gleitsman International Activist Award 2013 of Center for Public Leadership of Harvard Kennedy School; nominated and finalist

2013 Citizen of the University Award of University at Albany, SUNY
Recognizes outstanding contributions to the University

2013 Humanitarian Award of Iranian American Medical Society

2012 Elizabeth Taylor Award
  Inaugural award, in Recognition of Efforts to Advocate for Human Rights in the field of HIV presented by Actress Sharon Stone and sponsored by The Foundation for AIDS Research and the International AIDS Society

7. Faculty/Staff Publications


5. Under Preparation:
   Co-Author of two chapters about an overview of procedure of investigation and interrogation in Iran for two volumes of a book concerning the investigative interviewing (or interrogation) of victims, witnesses (Volume I) and suspects (Volume II). Dave Walsh, Gavin Oxburgh, Allison Redlich, Trond Myklebust, Contemporary developments and practices in investigative interviewing and interrogation: International perspectives. Routledge, UK. 2014

8. Obstacles that prevented reaching the unit’s 2013 – 2014 goals
• **Lack of funding** – at this time, we do not have funding to support interns, our Assistant Director, or our Directors’ salaries. We were approved for and have hired a grant writer, which is quite useful, however the lack of funding for other staff creates issues for hiring and retention. We have also been invited to many high-profile conferences, which, for the most part, we have sought and received outside support for our participation. With increased support we could take advantage of a greater number of those opportunities and have greater capacity to grow our reach. Despite limited University funding we have made great progress, but believe that with slightly more seed funding for administrative support we could have an exponentially larger impact.

• **Newness of the discipline** – Because the topic of health and human rights is a relatively new and innovative field, there are challenges that arise because of general unfamiliarity with the topic. It is sometimes challenging to find the grants available that directly address our area of interest, and there is a steep learning curve when approaching funders and collaborators to help them to understand our approach. Nonetheless, this is a rapidly growing field with increasing support and attention as was evidenced with specific details in our Institute approval and we are confident that we will continue to discover increasingly more opportunities.

• **Interdisciplinary institutional challenges** – We are working hard to support an interdisciplinary approach which gives consistent challenges because academic and professional organizations are not set up to promote interdisciplinary work. We have worked hard to overcome these challenges, and have largely succeeded, but we are consistently working against the “silo effect” that is so common in academia.

9. **Goals and objectives for 2014 – 2015**

We are in the process of seating a Strategic Planning Committee for the Global Institute of Health and Human Rights. We have already identified a chairperson for the committee, as well as gathered significant interest among Advisory Board and Board of Directors Members who are interested in serving. We intend to meet in the very near future to further define our goals for the upcoming year, and you may find our initial suggestions below. In the event that these goals are changed by the Strategic Planning Committee we will submit the updated list of goals to the VPR.

The Institute’s goals and objectives for 2014 – 2015 include:

• Hold the SUNY-YUK Joint International Conference on Health and Medical Science in April 2015.

• Obtain final approval for the Advanced Certificate in Health and Human Rights from SUNY system.
- Finalize the “3-in-1” program with Rockefeller College and Albany Law School.

- Submit 2 – 4 significant grant proposals based on Institute knowledge base and strengths.

- Develop Strategic Plans with coordination between Institute staff and Strategic Planning Committee.

- Hold 2 Board of Directors meetings and 1 Advisory Board meeting.

- Develop a model for a Student Initiated Interdisciplinary Minor (SIIM), which can be introduced to students in our affiliated departments. Students could use this model as a guide to develop and apply for their own SIIMs through the Office of Undergraduate Studies. This could potentially be developed officially into an established minor.

- Continue offering our undergraduate and graduate Health and Human Rights courses.

- Hire 2 faculty members, one with joint appointment in SPH/SCJ and another with joint appointment in ROCK/SPH, plus two graduate assistants, as approved by NYSUNY2020

- Continue to develop institutional partnerships locally, as well as with universities, NGOs and government agencies in the Middle East including in Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond.