Annual Report to Vice President for Research

Academic year: 2012-2013

Global Institute for Health and Human Rights

Submitted by:

Director, Kamiar Alaei
Associate Director, Arash Alaei

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Date:

October 1st, 2013
1. **Name of Unit**

   Global Institute for Health and Human Rights

2. **Name of Director**

   Director: Kamiar Alaei  
   Associate Director: Arash Alaei

3. **Brief Mission Statement (one paragraph, if possible)**

   The Global Institute for Health and Human Rights was founded in 2012 by physicians and renowned human rights advocates Kamiar Alaei and Arash Alaei with the mission to facilitate a deeper understanding of the intersection between health and human rights, and to promote innovative solutions to contemporary challenges in this arena. Through research, education, policy, advocacy and development, the Institute seeks to advance 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: interdepartmental 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 2012-13**

   The Institute was founded in 2013 and so the goals for the first year were general enough to allow for the natural development of reasonable and relevant objectives.

   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 fellowships for research areas of interest
   - Publishing articles on topics in 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
- Organizing academic courses, lectures, workshops and seminars
- Developing long-distance trainings and workshops on health and human rights
- Promoting the exchange of information on health and human rights
- Providing internships for students at international organizations working with the Institute on 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 2012-13
The Institute has made great progress in our first year toward the fulfillment of our goals and objectives. These include:

**Research**

**Research grants submitted:**


**Education**

**Proposal for Certificate Program in 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) is proposing the introduction of a Graduate Certificate in Health and Human Rights to be offered to students and professionals (health care professionals, lawyers, policy makers etc.) in collaboration with 3 other institutions.

**Proposal for Joint MIA/LLM Degree Program**
The proposed program of Masters of International Affairs (MIF), Masters of Law (LLM), and Health and Human Rights Certificate is a two-year program established by University at Albany SUNY 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.

**Course for Health and Human Rights, to be repeated**
*TPOS/TSPH 272 Health and Human Rights: an Interdisciplinary Approach*
Spring, 2013  The Honors College, University at Albany, State University of New York, Albany, NY
Graduate course in Health and Human Rights approved for Fall 2014
*RPOS/SSPH 586, RPOS/SSPH 486 Health and Human Rights: an Interdisciplinary Approach*
Spring, 2013  Cross-listed/Shared-resource, University at Albany, State University of New York, Albany, NY

2020 Proposal approved for the hire of two faculty members and two GAs

The Institute for health and human rights proposed hiring at least 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 in SPH/Rockefeller with a focus on health and human rights as relates to politics and policy, and one in SPH/SCJ with a focus on health and human rights in prisons and other places of deprivation of liberty. Each would be research intensive, but 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

At any given time we have had 2 to 4 interns hosted in the Institute coming from Albany Medical College, Albany Law School, Albany College of Pharmacy, University at Albany and more. These interns have performed important work instrumental to the development of the Institute, while earning academic credit toward their programs.

International Academic Program

Through this program we have hosted over 30 undergraduate and graduate students-at-risk both on-campus and online. Many of these students are focusing their studies and internship placements on health and/or human rights as a result of their affiliation with the institute.

Trainings and Lectures:

Summer, ’13  Global Challenges facing Children Youth and Families International Conference at Wheelock College in Boston
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer, ’13</td>
<td>Global Health Essentials training course at Weill Cornell Medical College</td>
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<td>Spring, 2013</td>
<td>Pediatric Grand Round at Albany Medical College, Continuing Medical Education (CME)</td>
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<td>Spring, 2013</td>
<td>Internal Medicine Grand Round at Albany Medical College, CME</td>
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<td>Fall, 2012</td>
<td>Guest Lecture at Global Health Course, Harvard School of Public Health</td>
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<td>Fall, 2012</td>
<td>Guest Lecture at Global Health Course, SUNY Downstate Medical College</td>
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<td>Fall, 2012</td>
<td>Guest Lecture at Medical School of University of Illinois in Chicago</td>
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<td>Spring, 2012</td>
<td>Guest Lecture at School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University</td>
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<td>Fall, 2012</td>
<td>Guest Lecture at Cancer Epidemiology course, School of Public Health, University at Albany</td>
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<td>Fall, 2012</td>
<td>Guest Lecture at Medical School, University of Wisconsin at Madison</td>
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**Advocacy/Outreach**

**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.

**18 modules authored on health and human rights in prisons**
Students of various universities & academic disciplines are working on U.N. modules. These modules focus on a plethora of subjects in regards to health and human rights in the Pan American region. Students are connected either with the Global Institute for Health & Human Rights (GIHHR) and/or the Pan
American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). Five of the 18 modules are under review for publication, and the rest are expected to follow shortly.

First framework for Health and Human Rights in Prisons
Dr. Kamiar Alaei is, since 2011, an external consultant of the PAHO Human Rights team. 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.

Consultant to Guidelines on Human Rights Education for Health Workers
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
“These guidelines present approaches to be adopted when planning or implementing human rights education for health workers related to six key structural areas: the human rights-based approach to human rights education; core competencies; curricula; training and learning processes; evaluation; and professional development and support of trainers. The guidelines also offer a list of key resources to assist in planning and implementing human rights education for health workers.”
http://www.osce.org/odihr/105053

Training in El Salvador
In February 2012, a workshop co-facilitated by Dr. Kamiar Alaei for over 100 representatives from 9 different countries of the Latin American region, took place in El Salvador to build capacity among the relevant Ministries on the importance of improving health conditions in prisons. The workshop was followed by visits to different prisons in the country to know on the major issues of concern and raise awareness on the importance of improving health and human rights conditions in prisons among relevant high officials and members of civil society. In July 2012, Dr. Kamiar Alaei conducted with PAHO human rights team a follow up visit to El Salvador to test the framework listed above that aims at assessing and improving human rights and health conditions in prisons using human rights instruments. During this follow up visit, capacity building sessions on health and human rights were co-facilitated by Dr. Kamiar Alaei among representatives of relevant ministries on specific issues, including HIV, TB, hepatitis, sexual and reproductive health, etc. Visits to different prisons were also conducted and capacity building seminars were also organized to different groups, including persons deprived of liberty, prison personnel, etc. Dr. Kamiar Alaei’s participation in these visits was crucial and his technical support has been requested from PAHO for upcoming visits in the region.

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 and is working closely with the GIHHR to develop these training programs. HOLD has adopted a local approach to addressing the stigma surrounding women, and reproductive health by involving community/religious leaders and developing programs in rural areas of Afghanistan. HOLD contains networks in local areas such as Farah province and has already established training programs for local communities.
  - AABRAR – AABRAR is dedicated to social, civic and economic integration and development in Afghanistan. It has provided training and services to 4 million persons in areas such as gender equality, institutional capacity building, health care, and local government capacity development in different provinces, including Kunduz.
  - 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. The MoPH and ANPHI can be involved in development of culturally applicable training programs on evidence-based practices that cater to the public health needs of the Afghan population.

- **Turkey**:  
  - Istanbul University  
  - Hacettepe University  
  - Bahcesihir 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**

2013 Cornell Medical College
Health and Human Rights Week 2012

Health and Human Rights Week was launched on World AIDS Day on December 1st, and concluded with Human Rights Day on December 10th, 2012. During that week we organized lectures, workshops, trainings, performances, tabling, and other events to promote the important issue of health and human rights, and help to bring people together to develop strategies for protecting that right. It was a great success, with collaboration from many academic departments and community organizations.

Field Work

Co-founding of 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

Mission

To provide free or reduced fee direct medical services and community education to target populations, and to provide advocacy and policy analysis on matters of health and human rights, on behalf of these populations.

Vision

To provide medical services to underserved populations, including internal medicine, dental services, cardiology, mental health services,

To develop an ever-increasing network of physicians and healthcare providers

To increase implementation of evidence-based medicine and best practices
To provide educational and social services to promote total health and well-being in an organic fashion

Engage in capacity building in target populations for community health promotion

Provide leading advocacy and policy analysis in support of the vision of health as a human right of the “first order” and as a prerequisite to human prosperity

6. Faculty/Staff Honors and Awards (if applicable)

Directors Kamiar and Arash Alaei have been awarded several honors and awards since the founding of the Global Institute for Health and Human Rights. These awards have provided an opportunity to promote the work of the Institute and the University at large, often on an international scale. Below are the awards and honors received by Drs. Kamiar and Arash Alaei since the unofficial founding of the Institute in the summer of 2012.

2013 **Gleitsman International Activist Award 2013 of Center for Public Leadership of Harvard Kennedy School**; nominated and selected for short list

2013 **Young Global Leader 2014 of World Economic Forum**; nominated

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 (if applicable)

Directors Kamiar and Arash Alaei have published several articles since the founding of the Institute which include:

Alaei K; Alaei A; Gupta A. HIV Scale-Up and the Politics of Global Health/ civil and political determinants of health. Submitted to *Global Public Health special issue* "HIV Scale-up and the Politics of Global Health" July 2013
Obstacles that prevented reaching the unit’s 2012-13 goals

Some of the challenges that prevented us from greater impact during this year include:

- **Delays in Institute approval** – we were officially approved as an Institute in April 2013, though we have been working since summer of 2012. This delayed our ability to develop certain partnerships, submit grant proposals, and engage in certain projects.

- **Lack of space** – we have limited office space to be able to invite faculty to work side by side to work on grants or research, to host interns, or to invite representatives from partnering institutions to meet about collaborations.

- **Lack of funding** – at this time, we do not have funding to support interns, our Assistant Director, or our Directors’ salaries. While we have been approved for a grant writer, with increased administrative capacity we could realistically support a search and hire. 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 2013-14**

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.

- Lay the groundwork for the SUNY-YUK Joint International Conference on Health and Medical Science
- Seek approval through the proper channels for Certificate Program, including:
  - Participating Colleges and Schools
  - UAlbany Provost
  - Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies
  - University Planning and Policy Committee
  - Graduate Academic Council
  - UAlbany President
  - etc.
- Submit 4-6 significant grant proposals, ideally including follow-up full proposals for the 4 preliminary proposals and concept papers submitted in 2012-2013
- Develop 1 year, 3 year, and 5 year Strategic Plans with the Strategic Planning Committee
- Hold 2 Board of Directors meetings and 1 Advisory Board meeting
- Establish a Health and Human Rights Student Association group in collaboration with our student interns and volunteers as an opportunity for outreach, students based programming, and funding
- 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.
- Move forward on the establishment of free-clinics including the clinic that is in process in California and the mobile clinic that is being developed in Turkey.
- Offer our undergraduate course, Health and Human Rights: an interdisciplinary approach, in The Honors College in Spring 2014
- Get approval for the shared-resource upper lever undergraduate/graduate course in Health and Human Rights to be offered in Fall 2014
- 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.