

Citation: 2003 Amanitare Award for a Non-African

Speech delivered upon presentation of an Amanitare award to Adrienne Germain and the Africa Program of the International Women's Health Coalition during the 2003 Amanitare Conference, February 4-7, Johannesburg.

The second award, for a non-African, goes to a distinguished individual of the international women's health and rights movement and the institution she built. We give this award to Adrienne Germain & the Africa Program, of the International Women's Health Coalition.

Adrienne Germain was born in 1947 to a conventional middle class American family who expected her to follow the rules of womanhood of her generation. By the early 1970's Adrienne had enough of playing the role of housewife and young academic, fled her husband and her masters degree program at Berkeley for New York where she spent two years at the Population Council and then joined the Ford Foundation as an assistant program officer. By 1981, her individuality and strength led her to become the youngest and first woman overseas representative of the Ford Foundation--in Bangladesh. Adrienne's work with Bangladeshi women was so remarkable it is still remembered by her friends and colleagues in that country today.

When Adrienne left the Ford Foundation she spent a year developing a vision of reproductive health at the Population Council and working with Joan Dunlop to build the IWHC.

Together with Joan Dunlop Adrienne took over the young organisation originally established by liberal American women in opposition to the Reagan Administration's conservative policies on abortion. The two women turned a small meagerly funded women's organisation into the formidable voice of the international women's health and rights movement that it is today.

Adrienne's personal contributions to the crucial and emerging issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights are widely known through her writing. Today, her views are sought after by the major international policy institutions and through her influence the lives of hundreds and thousands of women have been made that much more human. Yet despite all her international renown Adrienne remains a humble daughter and colleague within the woman's movement and just another one of us.

The Africa program of the International Women's Health Coalition was started in 1988 with a focus primarily on Nigeria. Since then it has expanded its support to groups and individuals in Cameroun and Mozambique. In 2002, it has become an important international partner of AMANITARE.

The program provides technical, financial, managerial and moral support to women's and adolescent health organisations, advocacy groups, individual health and rights activists, and education and clinical service providers in Africa countries.

The ethos of collaboration and collegiality between IWHC and their local colleagues is what distinguish them most in the field of international assistance. A 1992 evaluation of the program documented why women's groups chose to work with IWHC: compatibility of interests and values, flexible funding, moral support, important linkages, and a collaborative manner in providing technical assistance. This particular style of work enabled the local colleagues to evolve from a handful of volunteers with a vision in the early years to strong organisations able to contribute substantially to national policy, provide program leadership, and participate as effective spokespersons at global forums on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The program was managed in succession by Elizabeth Coit and Andrea Irvin. Since 1997 it has enjoyed the leadership of Corinne Whitaker and now has two additional full time staff. It has grown from an initial grants budget of two thousand dollars in 1988 to six hundred thousand dollars for grants in 2002.

It is important to mention that during its history the IWHC Board of Directors has had distinguished African members providing it with valuable wisdom and vision from our continent. One of its current Board members is Dr. Pascoal Mocumbi the Prime Minister of Mozambique.