The Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) received the 12th Annual Mildred Robbins Leet Award from InterAction’s Commission on the Advancement of Women on April 11th, 2006. InterAction is the largest alliance of US-based international and humanitarian non-governmental organizations, with over 160 member organizations working worldwide to overcome poverty, social exclusion and suffering by advancing social justice and basic dignity for all.

The Leet Award was established in 1995 to recognize InterAction member agencies that are making significant progress in attaining gender equity in their programs and management. The award is named after Millie Leet, a long-time advocate for gender equality in the InterAction community and co-founder of Trickle Up. This year’s Leet award criteria focused on organizational strategy for social change, concrete accomplishments, and lessons learned.

“The award recognizes the role of CHANGE as a powerful voice for how U.S. policies affect the health and rights of women and girls in Africa, Asia, and Latin America,” said Sam Worthington, National Executive Director of Plan USA and co-chair of InterAction’s Commission on the Advancement of Women. Founded in 1994, CHANGE advocates for fully funded reproductive health and HIV/AIDS programs, through educating policymakers and the public and informing U.S. legislation.

CHANGE won recognition for its cutting edge approach to advocacy, and its efforts to expand the envelope on critical issues that often are marred by politics and ideology, and that affect both the work of InterAction members and the individuals they serve worldwide. “CHANGE takes an evidence-based approach to advocacy, which involves combining scientific evidence, programmatic experience, and on-the-ground monitoring of the impact of U.S. policies. CHANGE also has created fresh partnerships on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health advocacy by linking women’s organizations, health groups, AIDS, and environmental organizations,” said the InterAction statement.

Included among the accomplishments for which InterAction recognized CHANGE were its work in:

- Promoting effective prevention strategies for women and girls within U.S. global AIDS policies and programs; build awareness of the harmful effects of the current U.S. approach to the global epidemic, and create consensus for changes in any reauthorization of PEPFAR;
- Galvanizing an advocacy campaign in 2003 to thwart application of the global gag rule to HIV/AIDS funding;
- Developing a model of collaborative accountability, in which organizations in both donor and recipient countries work together to ensure that both the donor government (the U.S.) and the recipient government are held accountable to basic human rights and public health principles;
- Developing the Global Women’s Issues Scorecard, which analyze the extent to which the Administration has translated policy commitments into funding or programs benefiting women’s lives. The scorecards -- created in collaboration with Women’s Environment and Development Organizations, Feminist Majority Foundation and the Communications Consortium Media Center -- generated considerable press coverage on issues such as inadequate support for international family planning, as well as women’s political decision making in Afghanistan and women’s security in Iraq.

In receiving the award at a membership luncheon during the 2006 InterAction Forum, Jodi L. Jacobson, Founder and Executive Director of CHANGE said: “Each of the people in this room dedicates their lives to improving the lives and wellbeing of millions of people throughout the world. Your efforts are increasingly enveloped by politics and ideologies that limit the potential of each of your organizations to do the best possible work on public health, human rights, and social development. CHANGE exists to push that envelope, by using evidence-based advocacy, coalition-building, on the ground research and other tools to
ensure that policies, programs and funding streams respond to the real needs of real people, rather than the ideological agendas of a specific moment in time."

Jacobson dedicated the award to Jose Barzelatto, a CHANGE board member and leading figure in the reproductive and sexual health and rights movement, who died in early April 2006.

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The Center for Health and Gender Equity is a U.S.-based non-governmental organization focused on the effects of U.S. international policies on the health and rights of women, girls, and other vulnerable populations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. www.genderhealth.org. If you would like more information, have difficulties viewing this message or wish to unsubscribe, please call 1-301-270-1182 or e-mail change@genderhealth.org.