

## Innovative Women in ADR:

### AAA-ICDR Foundation Funded Programs Led by and for Women

By Rebecca Storrow

“People seldom improve when they have no other role model but themselves to copy.”  
– Oliver Goldsmith

Positive role models motivate, teach, and inspire us to find our true potential, and overcome society’s structural barriers. It is intuitive that women as role models in the field of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) lead to empowered women peacemakers. It is also widely accepted that for ADR to meet the needs of diverse societies, more women should assume leadership roles in the field. In spite of the recruiting supports, structures, and quotas intended to accelerate participation by women in law and ADR, there continues to be a discrepancy between women and men, particularly at the higher levels of practice. A 2012 survey of 743 arbitrators and mediators by the ABA Women in Dispute Resolution (WIDR) Committee found that women represented only 18 percent of arbitrators.

The American Arbitration Association started a public foundation, the AAA-ICDR Foundation, as a 501(c)(3) organization in 2015. The Foundation has funded many innovative projects that are either led by or created to benefit women. Edna Sussman is the Chair of the Foundation’s Board. Bruce Meyerson, former chair of the ABA Dispute Resolution Section, is the Grants Committee Chair.

The AAA-ICDR Foundation is a separate 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization from the AAA and is able to solicit donations and provide grants to fund a range of worthy causes that promote the Foundation’s wide-reaching mission. Some areas of the Foundation’s mission include supporting ADR innovation, underserved communities, diversity, and of course, women’s initiatives. We think you will be proud, as we are, of the following examples of the work the AAA-ICDR Foundation has funded for women in our field in just its first three cycles of funding.

#### Prison of Peace



The Prison of Peace program successfully created a train-the-trainer process in California women's prisons prior to our funding. Laurel Kaufer, Esq., founder of the program, conducts the mediation training with her colleague Doug Noll, Esq. There is a brief, but impactful, video at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ac1m71GJbg4&sns=em>. Based on their previous good work, the AAA-ICDR Foundation funded their work in men's prisons in Valley State Prison (VSP), Chowchilla, California in 2017. A seven-week Mediation Workshop began with three full days of intensive training in Mediation Theory and Skills, continuing with four weekly afternoon follow-up sessions to provide ongoing mentoring and reinforce the use of these skills by participants as they engage in mediation practices with their peers at VSP. Final surveys showed that 97% of respondents indicated that this Mediation Workshop provided them with new, innovative or practical skills. Mediators conducted hundreds of inmate circles or mediations during the life of the grant.

Laurel Kaufer credits the successful AAA-ICDR Foundation grant for a subsequent grant received from the California Department of Corrections for over \$700,000. They have since expanded the work to many other prisons in California and provided the model to international ADR providers.

[Institute for Communication and Management of Conflicts – D.U.C.K.S.](#)

[Prison of Peace – Greece: Training Inmates and Prison Personnel in Peacemaking and Mediation](#)

Cofounders Dimitra Gavriil and Polychronis Kokkinidis began D.U.C.K.S. in 2013. The organization provided conflict resolution training in prisons in Athens, Greece. Because of the AAA grant to Prison of Peace that funded the Mediation Program at VSP, Dimitra Gavriil was able to be trained as a Prison of Peace mediator trainer. In October 2016, Prison of Peace began teaching in a Greek women's prison and in March 2017 in a Greek men's prison. D.U.C.K.S then began a new round of training in both prisons, this time with Prison of Peace trainee trainers assisting D.U.C.K.S trainers in the process. The AAA-ICDR Foundation is currently funding the D.U.C.K.S. prison mediation training program in Greece. D.U.C.K.S., similar to the Prison of Peace, has increased its funding subsequent to the Foundation's funding.

[Mediators Beyond Borders International's Women in Peacebuilding: International Training Institute](#)



In 2017, the AAA-ICDR Foundation funded training scholarships to enable women community leaders to complete four days of advanced mediation and community leadership training. A diverse group of peacebuilders came from ten countries and formed an identity as a regional cohort, working together over the course of the week to produce commitments for the future of their communities. In addition, they developed strong connections between their peacebuilding work and Rotary International as well as with Rotarians, with whom they are now connected. The week was filled with many “MBBI” moments marked by new learning, painful sharing, and connection over a particular skill or idea. Many came as experienced practitioners and left inspired, others came unsure and left confident, some came as skeptics and left completely engaged.

### Mediators Beyond Borders International’s Project Keshar (PK)



The report from Project Keshar illustrates the amazing work that is being done for women by Foundation grant recipients. Project Keshar, led by Mediators Beyond Borders International’s Prabha Sankaranarayan, received AAA-ICDR Foundation support to conduct mediation and leadership training for women from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine to underwrite PK Team members in such tasks as: selecting participants; overseeing seminar logistics; liaising with MBBI to ensure curriculum is culturally appropriate and contextually relevant; identifying and securing in-country relationships with leaders in mediation; hiring consultants from MBBI to teach, mentor and connect trainees to a global network of people committed to mediation; securing travel and training scholarships for participants; and conducting post-seminar webinars and mentoring. This included a four-day training with two trainers and two translators convened in Minsk, Belarus, in the month of April 2017 and three to five follow up sessions by webinar. Following the training in Minsk, participants engaged in six months of sustained consultation and mentoring to help trainees serve as advocates for mediation and for the implementation of ADR and peacebuilding projects in their home countries. They also facilitated mutually supportive relationships with relevant governmental, NGO, community and project support organizations to sustain these projects; participated in regional relationships with partner groups committed to ADR and peacebuilding activities; and connected through MBBI to global networks of people committed to ADR and peacebuilding.

With the support from the AAA-ICDR, participants learned the skills necessary to promote peacebuilding and a more civil society. From April 21-24, 2017, PK convened a PK

leadership team specializing in grassroots activism and interfaith cooperation. In their pre-training survey, many women expressed a desire and readiness to plan peacebuilding projects that they would implement in their countries to advance reconciliation, reduce tension and engage more women in the process of social change. In total, the project brought together 23 emerging mediators, PK leaders, as well as MBBI's renowned experts: 1) Loretta Raider, Principal of the Raider Consulting Group, Team Leader of the MBBI Sierra Leone Project and a former professor at Columbia University at the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCCR) and 2) Mary Montague, an expert in conflict management, peacebuilding and reconciliation, a founder of Women Waging Peace at Harvard, Winner of Bremen International Peace Award 2014, Lifetime Achievement Award for Peace Building from Northern Ireland Government and Mediator of the Year MBBI 2014.

Each of these projects have contributed to the field of ADR, and provided specifically for training, mentorship, and leadership for women. Without more opportunities such as these, the innovation that women bring to ADR will not be fully realized. The AAA-ICDR Foundation will continue its commitment to increasing the work of women and minorities in ADR. For more information please visit [www.aaicdrfoundation.org](http://www.aaicdrfoundation.org).



**Dr. Rebecca Storror** is a Regional Vice President with the American Arbitration Association (AAA) in Miami, Florida, managing large commercial arbitration and mediation cases. Within the AAA, Dr. Storror is a member of the AAA-ICDR Foundation Grant Committee, sits on the ADRScholars Committee, is a member of AAA Educational Services faculty, and supports [AAAMediation.org](http://AAAMediation.org). Dr. Storror has Florida Supreme Court certification in family, dependency, circuit, and county mediation. She was ADR Program Director for two Florida Judicial Circuit Courts and holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University, and a Master of Science degree in Organizational Leadership. Dr. Storror's most recent publication includes two chapters in *The Mediation Handbook*, published in 2017 by Routledge.