

The following is a report by the Anglican Observer at the UN, Ms Hellen Wangusa, from one of the Plenary gatherings of the 54th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) regarding the issue of Human Trafficking and Violence against women.

Defining the Challenges of Trafficking and Violence against Women, and Re-defining the Role of the Government and Men

One of the biggest challenges regarding human trafficking and violence against women is related to the conceptual development of what is understood by ‘violence’ against women- it is often regarded as domestic violence. Violence against women is a developmental issue.

A second challenge is competing for limited and dwindling funding for women’s work (UNIFEM), Women’s NGOs, and even emerging Men’s groups. Challenges in the legislative sector stem from the fact that Feminism has been correlated with the escalation of violence. However, there is still a need for information education and mechanisms for seeking redress. Violence against women is also still widely considered a ‘private’ issue, thus the state’s or government’s inability to implement UN and other instruments against it. Therefore, accountability and impunity using due-diligence, UN instruments, and other existing tools (as well as CEDAW) are needed.

Similarly, there is a need for mechanisms and models for collaborating with Police (especially on immigration), and collaboration between men and women against violence and trafficking. For too long we have focused on the supply side, but we need to pay close attention to the *demand* side of trafficking. This is vital to track, monitor, and develop means of rehabilitating trafficked persons.

Lastly, the issue of Gender for Men must be addressed: *what makes a man, a man?* Many emerging men’s groups such as the ‘White Ribbon Campaign’ and ‘Boys for Mothers’, are doing good work in revisiting and broadening the framework or understanding of ‘masculinity’. These groups work towards making violence against women part of our daily/local conversations. Power, privilege, and hierarchy are a valid entry point for discussing and questioning masculinity. At the same time, it is vital to progress from victimization to empowerment, and to guard against models that put women at risk as a direct consequence of patronage and financial insecurity.