



16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign

As we approach the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, this edition of IAWN News focuses on news and resources concerned with gender based violence and its elimination. The 16 Days begin on 25 November which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ends on International Human Rights Day, 10 December. Since the campaign began in 1991, women and men have used the 16 Days to raise awareness of violence against women and girls, strengthen local work around the issue, and lobby governments to implement the promises they have made to eliminate violence.

The churches of the Anglican Communion are ideally placed to do the work of transforming cultures and attitudes that tacitly permit or do little to prevent violence against women and girls. While local responses to gender based violence need to be shaped locally, taking into account existing strengths and resources, we hope that stories and resources in different parts of the Anglican Communion will encourage and inspire you to join with others and mark this significant annual event in some way.

“Violence against women is the most pervasive human rights violation in the world”

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations 1997-2006

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God of all tenderness and compassion...

Open our hearts to hear your call, to reach out to all who have been created by you;

open the doors of our community

to embrace women, men and children
experiencing violence and oppression,
to see their need, and to respond with love.

Lord, you are our refuge and strength, our very present help in trouble;

stretch out your hand and bring these women,
men and children close to you.

Give us the spirit to break the silence;

to stretch out our hands, giving courage, hope
and peace.

This is a prayer from Overcoming Family Violence worship materials prepared by churches in Australia for the Decade to Overcome Violence. For complete liturgy see:

www.ncca.org.au/files/Reports_and_Publications/D_OV/SoP_2_Worship_materials.pdf

See page 5 for more prayers offered for the 16 Days of Activism.

Rape in D R Congo

In August this year, IAWN member Ruth Mbennah of Project Hannah reflected all our shock and grief at the continuing rape of women and children in D R Congo:*

Dear sisters in the Lord. I am forwarding to you an email which made me cry this morning.

“Some 200 women gang-raped near Congo UN base: Rwandan and Congolese rebels gang-raped nearly 200 women and some baby boys over four days within miles of a UN peacekeepers' base in an eastern Congo mining district, an American aid worker and a Congolese doctor said.”

See what the women in Congo are going through. Please let us not keep quiet about the injustice and unfairness of this. Women were not created to be mistreated like this. Let's pray for them, but also think about how to stop it.

* *Project Hannah offers compassion, encouragement and hope to suffering women worldwide through prayer, awareness and radio programming.*

Building up capacity and resources

The Resources and Links sections of IAWN's website at <http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/resources/documents.cfm> and <http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/links/index.cfm> continue to gather theological and practical materials and models of practice around gender based violence that could be adapted to local contexts.

Meanwhile, Anglican women are looking to their own strengths and those of their own cultures and communities to seek positive ways forward.

Positive Indigenous cultural patterns in Australia

Ann Skamp, IAWN Steering Group member in the Anglican Church of Australia has drawn attention to resources and information from Australia's National Council of Churches in relation to the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence. The experience of Indigenous women in Australia is highlighted:

Sexual violence is a problem in most communities, black and white, and Indigenous women face many of the same problems as non-Indigenous women. In addition however, there are specific barriers faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including long-existing and hard-to-overcome difficulties in dealing with police, courts and counselling services in certain communities, and a reluctance to break silence for fear of adding to personal and community shame. Reliable statistics are scarce but evidence indicates a disproportionately high incidence of abuse.

As a result, Aboriginal women and men have been developing their own strategies in response to sexual violence, seeking to relate them to positive Indigenous cultural patterns and perspectives.

Such programs have included appropriate initiatives in family support; strengthening identity; behavioural change (men's and women's groups); night patrols; refuges; and community justice groups.

Capacity building in North India

IAWN member Pritty Sangma of the Diocese of North East India and Executive Member of the National Council of Churches of India writes about capacity building workshops on legal awareness in North India.

Violence against women is a major problem and is a violation of human rights. There are many forms of violence against women, including sexual, physical, or emotional, trafficking for forced labour or sex; and such traditional practices as forced or child marriages, dowry violence, and honour killing, when women are murdered in the name of family honour.

A two-day capacity building workshop on legal awareness was organised by Loreto College, Kolkata on August 12 and 19, 2010 and in YWCA, Kolkata, on 10 September.

The objective was to develop a basic understanding of the relevant laws related to women, and the process of law, and also to build capacity for self defence in the event of violence.



Workshop at the YWCA, Kolkata

The workshop provided girls with legal support and guidance about the fundamental rights of women and the legal nuances to claim those rights. It was important for the participants to understand the essential aspects of how and why laws are made. It focused mainly on the important laws of women and the other government mechanisms which play a pivotal role in asserting these rights. The Protection of Women against Domestic Violence (PWDV) Act was explained to equip the young women with practical techniques to handle matters of violence.

Men and women are born equal but do circumstances and situation provide us with equality? This question was linked to how the CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of ALL Forms of Discrimination against Women works, and how various forms of inequality had led to the birth of this Convention. The laws related to dowry under the Indian Penal Laws and the law of sexual harassment in public places were discussed. There was discussion on the difference between teasing and sexual harassment. When the group was asked if they had faced sexual harassment in public places, most of the participants said they have ignored it. A few were of the opinion that it is pointless going to the police, as they were always discouraging. They were encouraged to assert their rights by lodging complaints with the police. Sexual harassment in public places is the most common form of violence against women. The group was briefed on what the various laws meant regarding such violence and they were urged to spread awareness on the same. "Shruti", a short film based on real life was then shown that showed how violence occurs in our own homes.

These three days of interaction with the girls was a great learning experience. Most said they found the workshop highly enriching. One girl said: "This workshop has been a great eye opener". Another

commented: "I feel this type of workshop should be conducted for men and older boys so that they are aware of the laws." The students demonstrated their ability and interest in understanding the legal provisions and procedures concerning violence against women. It was felt that this will help them to defend themselves better and communicate with women in the community constructively. Most of the girls asked for more workshops in the future.

Congo: Ensemble Nous Pouvons

"Together we can." Mugisa Isingoma describes initiatives for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in D R Congo.

In the Congo we have held seminars on culture, domestic violence and better family life. We do this to eliminate all kinds of women's discrimination; what they are facing and to promote better families so that children will grow up with a good culture of no violence and gender equality. Family is the foundation of strong and healthy communities. Our wish is that men and women work together.

In spite of the fact that the number of women is often less than men in decision-making meetings, we appreciate it when women are able to attend and speak openly in the meeting about their ideas.

We cannot promote someone who has not been educated so this is why we started a literacy program to help girls and women to know how to read and write. The number taking part was 58 (4 men and 54 women) and at the end we gave to each person a bible and it is still going on.

For your information, in the Diocese of Boga we have started a new activity: ENP – in French "Ensemble Nous Pouvons" – and in English "Together We Can" It helps us to decide how to use our own resources to achieve our aim. As I am writing this report, we organized Harambe (collection of money) in the Diocese of Boga and we got \$1,388. We bought a roof (*des toles*) with the money for building the women's house, because our aim is to have a space for women here in Bunia. We will continue with the program until the end.

Episcopal Church Partnership

In The Episcopal Church, three women's organizations have formed a partnership to combat violence against women. Kim Robey explains:

"Violence against women is the most pervasive human rights violation in the world" is a sentiment spoken by Kofi Annan and echoed by almost every human rights organization, the United Nations, and countless other NGOs around the world. Everyone from Eve Ensler, who has created her own non-profit organisation to advocate against violence to Nickolas Kristoff in his bestselling book *Half the Sky*, has voiced what we all know...violence against women continues at an alarming pace. In the USA, violence against women and girls manifests itself in human trafficking, rape, domestic violence,

pornography and less severe ways every day. No aspect of our society is immune.

For the first time, the Episcopal Church Women (ECW), the Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC) and Anglican Women's Empowerment (AWE) have formed a partnership for the purpose of developing an Episcopal Church campaign of activism and awareness to coincide with the international 16 Days of Activism established by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University.

Since 1991, over 2,000 organizations in about 156 countries have participated in the 16 Days campaign which focuses on: raising awareness about gender-based violence as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional and international levels; strengthening local work around violence against women; establishing a clear link between local and international work to end violence against women; providing a forum in which organizers can develop and share new and effective strategies; demonstrating the solidarity of women around the world organizing against violence against women; and creating tools to pressure governments to implement promises made to eliminate violence against women.

Created in the image of God

Claudette Kigeme writes about promoting family values, training leadership, and supporting girl victims of violence in Burundi.

In Burundi we have been working in partnership with UNIFEM, UNFPA and other women's organizations about the 16 Days to overcome violence against women. As Anglicans we are sensitizing about the promotion of family values in the fight against gender based violence. We are mainly training church leaders as well as women leaders so that they can train couples and especially those preparing for their marriage to know the roles and responsibilities of the spouses in a family setting, the best way of preventing gender based violence in educating their children, and how they could help affected families. While emphasizing that both men and women are created in the image of God and that family is a divine creation, the values of love, unity, mutual care, respect and dignity, are focused on.

We are also helping young girls who have been victims of gender based violence to develop skills and reintegrate into social, active life with high esteem and self confidence.

England: World Cup sees increase in domestic violence

Cynthia Dowdle of the Church of England has drawn attention to a local Police report that domestic abuse rocketed in the English county of Merseyside on the day that England exited the Football World Cup.

The Merseyside Police Force's Family Crime Investigation Unit received 145 referrals for domestic abuse on 27 June after England lost to Germany, so ending the team's participation in the tournament.

This number compared to an average of 10.9 offences per day during the games.

The Police Force and its partners launched a campaign to urge victims and their families to draw a line under domestic abuse by reporting any incidents of abuse to police and other support agencies. The campaign was launched in St Helens town centre on 12 June, the day of the first England game, to raise awareness of the help available to victims and their families. Shoppers were asked to show their support for victims of domestic abuse by standing behind a red line, demonstrating the need to draw a line under domestic abuse.

Throughout the tournament, a domestic abuse enforcement operation attended reports of domestic abuse in a specialist domestic abuse vehicle equipped to provide expertise in the investigation of each case as well as giving vital support to victims and their families to ensure they are given every opportunity to break the cycle of domestic abuse.



To mark the end of the World Cup, officers from Merseyside Police and staff from support agencies across Merseyside were photographed with red lines painted on their faces holding words highlighting how domestic abuse may make victims feel. The aim was to show that although the World Cup had finished, support is available all year round to help victims break the cycle of abuse.

The Church of England has developed guidelines for those with pastoral responsibilities at parish and diocesan level in responding to domestic abuse. See www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/domesticabuse.pdf. An example of a diocesan resource (Oxford, Church of England) giving parishes information and advice for combating domestic violence and supporting victims can be downloaded from the Resources section of IAWN's website.

The Power of Language

Elizabeth Loweth of the Anglican Church of Canada reflects:

Women around the globe have already made inroads into the use of male centered language in everything from the use of "she/he" in documents (a change from the generic "he" formerly used alone), to rethinking such words as "game plan" to become "mission statement".

Some uses of language, however, are particularly harmful. Take "adult entertainment" which too often refers to pornographic material based on the abuse, sexual and otherwise, of women and children. The

word 'adult' means having maturity which in turn indicates being a responsible person and not one whose entertainment is found in the abuse of others. We need to see that media and the general public use the correct words ... it is "abusive pornography" which is neither adult nor entertaining.

A few members of the media now put quotation marks around "honor" killing reports, and while this is appreciated, it is not enough. Had the murder been done by others it would be called just that...planned and pre-meditated murder, which in most courts would mean murder in the first degree. Even so simple a term as "domestic abuse" has a softer sound than if the event had taken place outside the home in which case it would be termed "assault" or "attack", bringing more serious attention to the crime.

In our language we often hear of "acceptable levels" of poverty, unemployment, collateral damage, etc. There are no acceptable levels of people who are living in poverty. There is no acceptable level of collateral damage (citizen casualties) in warfare. We disempower the victims and ourselves if we are willing to think in terms of accepting the harm to those who lack enough of this world's goods to thrive, or to those who are victims of war or disaster.

We believe in a God who cares about each person. If we are to act out our faith, it is imperative to treat others with respect. Part of that involves using language which conveys the truth. During these 16 Days, let us together seek to change the use of words so that dignity and respect are shown to all.

The White Ribbon Campaign

As well as being the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November is White Ribbon Day. The White Ribbon Campaign is a global initiative for men taking more responsibility for eliminating violence against women. Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. It is a way of saying, 'Our future has no violence against women'. The Campaign has a number of national websites with excellent resources. See:

Brazil www.lacobranco.org.br

Canada www.whiteribbon.ca

UK www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk

Australia www.whiteribbonday.org.au

Pakistan www.whiteribbon.org.pk

Scotland www.whiteribbonscotland.org.uk

Aotearoa New Zealand www.whiteribbon.org.nz

Why not place a large white ribbon on your church or cathedral building to indicate support for the "No Violence, No Silence" of the 16 Days of Activism?

If you have comments or an item you would like to be considered for the next issue, please send them by 1st April 2011 to cynthia.dowdle@liverpool.anglican.org or annskamp@aapt.net.au.