

LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS & ADVOCACY/UNITED NATIONS

CEDAW MARKS THIRTY YEARS OF PROGRESS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS



How has CEDAW changed the lives of women around the world? In Cameroon, it was used to bring justice to village women suffering rape and other physical abuse from their husbands. In Morocco, it sparked legal reforms hailed as “revolutionary” in their ability to reconcile universal human rights principles and that country’s Islamic heritage. In India, it enabled sexual harassment in the workplace to be outlawed. These are just three examples of CEDAW and its impact as a force for change in women’s lives.

Thirty years after its adoption (12/18/79) it remains the essential international tool for achieving women’s human rights. However, the Convention’s implementation has been uneven and 7 countries still have not ratified it—Iran, Nauru, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga and USA. Currently, 186 countries are bound by the provisions of CEDAW.

We know that serious human rights violations against women are still happening and violence against women is a major concern worldwide.

Much of the violence is occurring in conflict and post-conflict areas. The statistics are staggering. It is estimated that 70 percent of women in these areas have or will experience gender-based violence.

Dialogue in the UN is ongoing and a roundtable discussion took place on December 3 at UNHQ in New York. Highlights from this discussion will be reported in future issues of this newsletter.



Zonta of Northern Valley Can Help

To join the campaign, each of our members can do several small things. Each of us can register on the Say NO website. Each of us can help raise awareness about violence against women. The statistics are clear and undeniable.

The goal of the campaign is

to gather 100,000 “actions” by March and one million actions by November 2010.

Whether you volunteer to help SOS, donate or advocate for better policies, every action counts.

More than 5 million people had already signed on to the original Say NO campaign.

We can all add our names to this “powerful” call to take one action now.

You can also sign up to stay informed of the progress of the campaign.

This is not a “misprint.” It is information that bears repeating.

Written

&

Edited

By

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LAA/UN Chair

Visit us at:

www.zontanvnj.org

Say NO

“We must unite. Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any government.

The time to change is now. Only by standing together and speaking out can we make a difference.”

**Secretary-General
Ban Ki-Moon**



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WORLDWIDE

Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. According to UNIFEM, country data available shows that up to 70 percent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime—the majority from husbands, intimate partners or someone they know. Among women 15-44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined.



Violence against women is perhaps the most pervasive human rights violation that we know today. It devastates lives, fractures communities and stalls development. It takes many forms and occurs in many places—homes, schools, work, refugee camps —or as a tactic of war.

FACTS:

Femicide: the murder of women because they are women

- In the US, 1/3 of women murdered each year are killed by intimate partners.
- In South Africa, a woman is killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner.
- In India, 22 women were killed each day in dowry-related murders in 2007.
- In Guatemala, 2 women are murdered, on average, every day.

Trafficking

- Women and girls account for 80% of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked annually, with the majority (79%) trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Harmful practices

- About 100 to 140 million girls and women have experienced female genital mutilation.
- More than 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18.

Sexual Violence

- As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical and/or sexual violence during pregnancy.
- In Sao Paulo, Brazil, a woman is assaulted every 15 seconds.
- In Ecuador, adolescent girls reporting sexual violence in school identified teachers as the perpetrators in 37% of the cases.

Cost of Violence against Women

- Domestic violence alone cost approximately US 1.16 billion,. In Australia it costs an estimated US\$1.38 billion a year.

(continued on page 3)



Beijing + 15

Forum

February 27-28

**Sponsored by the
NGO Committee
on the Status of
Women**

Register by 2/15/10

At www.ngocsw.org

What is Statelessness?

The Women's Refugee Commission has, for the past 20 years, advocated vigorously for laws, policies and programs to improve the lives and protect the rights of refugee, internally displaced and asylum seeking women, children and young people.

Statelessness, or the lack of nationality, impacts the daily lives of 11-12 million people around the world. It is estimated that half of these people are women. All displaced women and girls face extreme levels of risk to their safety and well being. This is exacerbated when women and girls become stateless.

Women become stateless in a number of ways. Many of the laws discriminate against women. Gender discrimination in nationality means that a woman can lose her right to citizenship by virtue of marriage because she has to denounce her nationality when she gets married. Often women cannot pass on their nationality to their women.

Other ways of becoming stateless is through loss of birth records that are destroyed during conflict or disasters. Also, families forced to flee their homes may leave without identification or have them stolen.

As a result of being stateless, refugee women and girls are also unable to obtain passports, travel freely or acquire jobs in the formal sector. This puts them at risk of using smugglers to remove themselves from difficult situations.

Statelessness may lead to forced or early marriage, harassment, sexual and physical violence and trafficking. Traffickers of stateless children cannot be taken to court when children are without proper documents that prove their age or resident status.

Key actions are needed to protect stateless women, children and youth around the world.

- Ensure that every child is registered at birth, identify cases of disputed nationality and grant citizenship when a child would otherwise be stateless.
- To protect women, disseminate the new guidelines on fuel strategies (which provide fuel and alternatives). This will stop women from being attacked when they collect firewood.
- To protect women, undertake a series of awareness campaigns to ensure they obtain citizenship certificates.

For more information go to www.womenscommission.org/pdf/refugee_girls_book1.pdf

For the book *Refugee Girls—the Invisible Faces of War*—48 pages.

VAW Worldwide continued

Sexual Harassment

- Between 40-50% of women in the European Union countries experience unwanted sexual advancement, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at their workplace.
- In the US, 83% of girls aged 12-16 experienced some sort of sexual harassment in public schools.