



February 2009 LAA/UN COMMITTEE

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Zonta Club
Of
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Violence Against Women is the Least Punished Crime



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Violence against women is the least punished crime in the world. Last November 25th, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, both the head of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) called on policymakers to build on the stimulus that recent efforts have provided.

UNIFEM Executive Director Ines Alberdi pointed to two significant events that have occurred that should give advocacy groups the incentive to increase efforts. The first is the global campaign,



UNITE to End Violence against Women which has a 2015 deadline (this coincides with the date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals). The second was the Security Council's resolution 1820 which recognizes sexual violence in situations of armed conflict as a threat to national and international peace and security and calls for decisive actions by all involved in the conflict to

protect women and girls. UNFPA Executive Director Obaid described the battle to end violence against women as "a major challenge of our time." The fact is it still persists 60 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted.

Secretary Ban issued a statement noting that progress has been made but, "We need to do more to enforce laws and counter impunity. We need to combat attitudes and behavior that condone, tolerate, excuse or ignore violence committed against women."

International Women's Day—March 8th

The theme for International Women's Day 2009 is "Women and Men United to End Violence against Women and Girls." When, in 1975, the United Nations adopted International Women's Day to be celebrated on March 8th of each year, it was to remind the world that if women do not enjoy human rights fully, they will not be able to participate equally in strengthening peace and security. It is also a day when the world's women should be examining how far they have come and to see how far they have to

go.

Zonta International celebrates Zonta Rose Day on the same day with the same purpose. It is a time when all Zontians should review their commitment to the struggle to attain true equality and safety for women around the globe. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

Child Brides: Stolen Lives

What are the statistics on child marriage? The percentages of girls marrying before the age of 18 are astounding:

- More than 100 million girls under the age of 18 (in the developing world) will be married in the next 10 years
- In Southern Asia, 48%, nearly 10 million— are married before the age of 18
- In Africa, 42% were married before turning 18
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, 29% of girls are married by age 18

What are the effects of child marriage?

- Premature Pregnancy—bearing

children before being physically or emotionally ready

- Maternal Mortality—girls younger than 15 are 5 times more likely to die during child birth or pregnancy than older women. Pregnancy-related deaths are the leading cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide
- Infant Mortality—mortality rates for babies born to mothers under the age of 20 are almost 75% higher than children born to older mothers
- Health Problems— premature childbirth can lead to problems such as fistula
- HIV/AIDS—married girls may be more likely to contract sexually transmitted diseases

- Illiteracy—child brides are often pulled out of school and denied further education and their children are more likely to be illiterate.
- Poverty—isolated and denied education and employment, child brides find it difficult to break the poverty cycle
- Abuse and violence— child brides are more likely to experience domestic abuse and violence
- Mental health—violence and abuse can lead to post-traumatic stress and depression
- Isolation and Abandonment— child brides are often isolated from their peers and abandoned if they develop health problems such as fistula

NOW on PBS

The entire film “Child Brides: Stolen Lives” may be previewed online at <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/341/index.html>

At the website, it is possible to get a free screening kit for the film. The LAA/UN Committee has requested the screening kit and will inform members of a possible screening in the near

future.

Excerpts from the movie have been screened at the United Nations under the auspices of the Working Group on Girls, NGO Committee on UNICEF.

Our screening will include watching the film and then discussing it. We hope to make this screening open to the public and will search out a venue

which will be conducive to both a screening of the film and a discussion of it afterwards.

This should be an opportunity for our club to reach out to our communities and make them aware of a worldwide problem and how we, as Americans, can help to alleviate the problem.

Say No to Violence Against Women Continues

On November 25, 2008, UNIFEM submitted more than 5 million signatures to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. This marked the end of the first phase of UNIFEM’s Say No to Violence against Women campaign. UNIFEM has plans to expand the network and advocate for action. The agency plans to do this in the context of the Secretary-General’s multi-year campaign on ending violence against women and girls.

Since November 25th, the Under

Secretary of State for Italy and ministers from the UK have signed on to the campaign. In December, UNIFEM received more than 3500 signatures from Fiji. The Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children in Tanzania launched a national awareness campaign. In the European Parliament, Swedish MP and Vice Chair of the Women’s Rights Committee is making efforts to gather support of all members for a written

declaration that calls for a “European Year on Zero Tolerance of Violence against Women.”

The Say No campaign has become a catalyst for worldwide action.

We will continue to report significant strides as space permits.



UNITED NATIONS Office on Drugs and Crime Issues Report on Human Trafficking



February 13, 2009

A *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* was recently presented by the UNODC. It provides new information on the most shameful of crimes. The report is based on data from 155 countries and offers the first international assessment of the scale of human trafficking and what is being done to combat it.

At the introduction of the report, the Executive Director of UNODC, Antonio Maria Costa, said that “many governments are still in denial. There is even neglect when it comes to either reporting on, or prosecuting cases of human trafficking.” Among the statistics he mentioned was the increase in the number of convictions for human trafficking. Two out of every five countries covered by the report, however, had not recorded any convictions.

The most common form of human trafficking is sexual exploitation and the victims are overwhelmingly women and girls. Women also make up the majority of traffickers. A sad commentary when we realize that women trafficking women is “business as usual” in some parts of the world.

Children as victims of trafficking ranges from 20% worldwide to up to 100% in parts of West Africa.

The second most common form of trafficking is forced labor and is considered to make up about 18% of trafficking victims. This number may not be accurate due to the fact that this type of trafficking is often not detected.

Most trafficking takes place “close to home” rather than across continents.

The report shows that the number of Member States implementing the UN Protocol against Trafficking in Persons has doubled from 54 to 125 (of the 155 States covered). However there are still many countries that “lack the necessary legal instruments or political will.”

“This report increases our understanding of modern slave markets, yet it also exposes our ignorance,” said Mr. Costa. “We have a big picture, but it is impressionistic and lacks depth. We fear the problem is getting worse, but we can not prove it for lack of data, and many

governments are obstructing.”

Mr. Costa called on “governments, the private sector, and the public at large to step up the fight against trafficking in persons. ‘More must be done to reduce the vulnerability of victims, increase the risks to traffickers, and lower demand for the goods and services of modern-day slaves.’”

To help increase public awareness of the problem of human trafficking, Mr. Costa appointed actress Mia Sorvino as a Goodwill Ambassador to Combat Human Trafficking. “We know that Mira’s commitment to the plight of trafficking victims will move people to take action against modern-day slavery,” he said.



53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

The 53rd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will convene at UN Headquarters in New York on March 2-13, 2009. The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS is the priority theme. The review theme to be discussed is “Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.” Participants will also debate “Gender perspectives

of the financial crisis.”

The Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1946 to promote the advancement of women throughout the world. It met for the first time in 1947 at Lake Success, NY.

In the beginning the Commission focused on legal measures to protect the human rights of women. From the beginning, the work of the Commission drew interest from

international women’s groups.

By the 1960s, the Commission began to tackle women’s role in economic and social development.

In 1975, the first global Women’s Conference took place in Mexico City. A global plan of action to improve the status of women was adopted.

The Platform of Action adopted in Beijing in 1995 strengthened the consensus and commitments achieved through the Commission.