

Observation of the CSW 57
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Regional Vice President North America

1. On-line discussion 23 July – 03 August 2012

2. Monday 04 March:
10:30am Church Center 10th Floor
Unique Indigenous, Non indigenous, and Pasifika Approaches to Violence Against Women and Girls
Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) and Te Ohaakii a Hine Pacific Islands Safety and Prevention Project

3pm-4:14pm UN Conference Room D
Mali -Violence Against Women and Girls in Situations of Conflict

4:30-6:00pm Church Center Drew Auditorium
Older Women Conversation Circle

6:30 CC Drew Auditorium
Film: *It's a Girl*

3. Tuesday 05 March
10:30am CC 2nd floor
Violence, Economics and War: From Theory to Action
United Methodist Women and Global Network for Peacebuilders

1:15-2:45pm US Mission
Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence

3:00pm Conference Room B
The Human Rights Universal Periodic Review- Violence Against Women and Girls

4. Wednesday 06 March
10:00-11:15am Conference Room B
UNESCO -Safety of Women Journalists

1:15-2:30pm Conference Room D
Thailand –Critical Issues on Violence Against Women and Girl Children: Cultural and Social Transformations

4:30pm CC Chapel
Human Rights, Security and Young Women
World YWCA

5. Thursday 07 March

12:30pm CC 10th Floor

Violence Against Women in the Workplace –The Style and Substance of Economic
Discrimination

International Federation of Business and Professional Women

4:30pm CC 8th Floor

Marriage Without Happiness or a Future: Child Marriage, Polygamy, and “Traditional Values”
Open Society Foundation

6. Friday 08 March

10:30am CC 2nd Floor

A Global Outrage: It Should not Hurt to be a Girl

National Council of Women in the United States

1:15pm-2:45pm German Mission

Germany –Harmful Traditional Practices- Violence Against Women and Girls Laws vs. Practice:
Rhetoric vs. Reality

4:45-6:00pm Conference Room B

Ireland- Gender based violence and fragile states –Shared learning to Accelerated action

7. Saturday 09 March

10:30am CC 11th Floor

In Her Own Image: Restorative Justice, African Women and the Female Child

The Dranmeh Institute

2:30pm CC

Ending Abuse in the Birth Place

International Confederation of Midwives

8. Monday 11 March

12:30pm CC 2nd Floor

Partnering to Prevent Trafficking of Women and Girls

NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons

My experiences at CSW57 brought forth emotions of shock, despair and hope. The primary theme for the sessions held from 04-15 March 2013 at the United Nations in New York was “Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls”.

My introduction to this topic began in an on-line discussion held from 23 July – 03 August. There, the theme was explored in depth by interested parties who had to register with the UN to participate. The main conclusions from these interesting sessions concerned prevention of violence through: influencing government policies and laws, increased education and training, raising awareness of the issues by means of large media events, increasing links with faith-based organisations, and training police, lawyers and judges to handle events of violence against women with greater delicacy and compassion. The need for one-stop centers for victims and for women to have economic independence was stressed. Special attention was paid to women with multiple risk factors that include unregistered residents who would not come forth after a violent event, the disabled and women with HIV/AIDS, all of whom are often denied access to justice or shelter. Last, it was noted that services for victims of violence are nearly all located in urban centers leaving rural women without access to care or justice.

At the CSW57 in New York, I attended events that discussed the vulnerability of women from all social strata, nations, and age groups. I learned of certain harmful “traditional practices” such as female genital mutilation and child marriage that are spreading globally with migration. I also learned that while laws may exist that forbid such practices, it is common that these laws are ignored in favour of tradition, even when no one can provide a basis for the practice. Other sessions reviewed the increase of violence toward women and girls during times of war when the most vulnerable suffer greatly and we reviewed cases of the reversal of women’s rights in areas of the world that have changed politically. I listened as older women revealed how their physical and economic security changed as they aged and listened to testimony from women who had been trafficked as young girls. We watched the US debut of a movie detailing the practice of gendercide of female babies, particularly in China and India, a compelling, educational, and very disturbing film that needs to be seen widely, *It’s a Girl*. There were presentations on how detrimental stereotypes of females are maintained through the media and culture. Excellent sessions detailed violence and discrimination against women in the workplace both physically and economically and one described the safety risks for female journalists. It should be noted that many presentations addressed steps to overcome violence toward women and girls beginning with the sensitization of boys and men concerning the value of women, the increasing number of females demanding and receiving an education and going on to positions where they have a voice to bring about the end of harmful practices and cultural views against women, and the provision of funds that permit women to start small businesses. Much work has been done to address violence toward women and girls both legally and practically resulting in a gradual but definite change in how girls and women are treated, particularly in developed countries; but these sessions made all too clear the fact that there is still an enormous amount of work that needs to be accomplished before all girls and women are free to accomplish all that they wish to in this life. There is much that needs to be done to combat violence ranging from subtle discrimination in social and work circles to overt violence against women and girls resulting in tremendous physical and psychological damage.

It is such a privilege to attend these sessions and while they often prove disturbing, they make clear what we need to know in order to be aware of and work for an end to all forms of violence against women and girls in this world.

The final conclusions from CSW57 speak of many wonderful things but also contain language in some parts that is offensive to those who value life at every stage, from conception to natural death. Wording such as “reproductive rights” makes clear the powerful presence of those who advocate abortion. The Holy See and others did well in forcing an adherence to earlier treaties that value life and we need to continue to support these efforts in word and action. The agreed conclusions from CSW 57 and much other information on the meetings and side events can be found at www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/57sess.htm.

May Our Lady, Queen of Peace, patroness of WUCWO, hear our prayers for our sisters in danger who despair of ever escaping a life of discrimination and violence against their persons and ask her Son to bring them peace and justice.