

RESTORING DIGNITY

Religious Youth Say **NO** to Violence Against Women

Religions for Peace

Newsletter

Restoring Dignity, Religious Youth Say No to Violence Against Women, is a global campaign led by *Religions for Peace* Global Interfaith Youth Network to engage religious youth and communities in efforts to end violence against women.

Restoring Dignity, Religious Youth Say No to Violence Against Women, aims at mobilizing religious communities and leaders for common action to end violence against women through:

- Awareness: Increasing awareness on violence against women and girls and the need to address it.
- Education: Deepening understanding on the different forms of violence against women and girls and share knowledge on the religious and spiritual teachings and principles to end it.
- Advocacy: Joining voices with survivors, women and men of faith, the United Nations and other non-faith actors to advocate on prevention, addressing impunity and ensuring security for women and girls.

RESTORING DIGNITY WEBSITE – RELIGIOUS YOUTH SAY NO TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The website for Restoring Dignity has been officially launched and can be viewed at <http://restoringdignity.religionsforpeaceinternational.org/>. The website features a separate page for the initiative Religious Youth Say No to Violence Against Women. On the website, you can download “Restoring Dignity: A Toolkit For Religious Communities to End Violence Against Women” and send an e-card created by youth to a friend asking them to participate in the initiative. Additionally, the restoring dignity pledge is featured and can be electronically signed by visitors from across the world.

RESTORING DIGNITY FACEBOOK PAGE

The Restoring Dignity Facebook page can be visited at www.facebook.com/restoringdignity. The page provides information on the campaign and allows visitors to sign the pledge. The page was currently used to feature the 16 Days of Activism by posting each day a new action to end violence against women.

RESTORING DIGNITY YOUTUBE VIDEOS

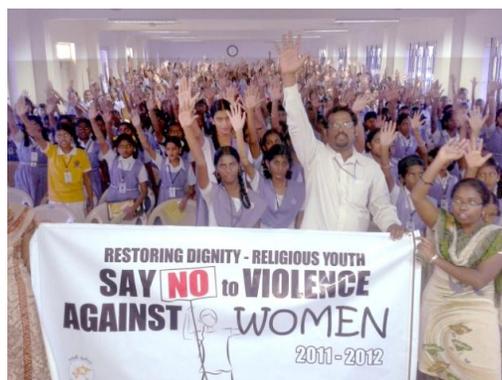
As part of the Restoring Dignity Campaign, members of *Religions for Peace* Global Interfaith Youth Network are recording and posting on YouTube their ideas on how religions promote the inviolable dignity of women and girls and how religious youth possess specific assets to help bring an end to violence against women. The videos may be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/user/RestoringDignity>.

RESTORING DIGNITY SAY NO UNITE PAGE

Religions for Peace has an official page on Say No Unite and can be viewed at <http://saynotoviolence.org/user/36>. The page features past and current Restoring Dignity initiatives.

INDIA | INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

On 25 November 2011, to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, members of the Indian Interfaith Youth Network visited PSGR Krishnammal Girls Higher Secondary School in Peelamedu, Coimbatore to speak about the rights of women to be protected from discrimination and violence in India. They educated over 500 young women about the Indian constitution which guarantees equal rights to women and prohibits discrimination based on gender; the protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, which ensures the provision of services like shelter and medical facilities for victims of domestic violence; The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, which makes giving and taking dowry in India illegal; and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, which prohibits the marriage of girls under 18 years old. The event empowered the young women to hold their government and communities accountable for enforcing these laws and protecting women from violence.



KENYA | KENYA INTERFAITH YOUTH NETWORK PARTICIPATES IN RESTORING DIGNITY

The Kenya Interfaith Youth Network has lent its support to the campaign by partnering with the Women of Faith Network in Kenya to implement Restoring Dignity initiatives. The youth have been working with religious leaders in the districts of Kisii and Kilgoris to educate and sensitize them about gender based violence, and particularly female genital cutting. Additionally, the youth network is working with the women's network to identify victims of gender based violence and to provide them guidance and support.

MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES | GLOBAL CAMPAIGN LAUNCH OF RESTORING DIGNITY - RELIGIOUS YOUTH SAY NO TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN –

On 12 October 2011, *Religions for Peace* Global Interfaith Youth Network convened over 100 youth, religious leaders, and government representatives for the official launch of the new initiative, Restoring Dignity – Religious Youth Say No to Violence Against Women. The launch was held at the historic University of Santo Thomas in Manila, the Philippines, and was attended by spiritual and religious leaders including, **Dr. Lilian J. Sison**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* – Philippines, **Madame Lourdes V. Mastura**, President of Religions for Peace – Philippines, and **Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**, Assistant Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* – International.

The launch was moderated by **Ms. Lama Mahmoud Azab**, Member of *Religions for Peace* European Interfaith Youth Network, who presented the initiative and gave a stirring speech on why religious communities, and particularly religious youth, have the moral responsibility to say no to violence against women. Ms. Azab explained that religious principles of the world's major faiths affirm the position of religion as a force for human dignity and mandate that women be respected and valued in society. Ms. Azab also explained that violence against women and girls is a direct assault on the positive vision of peace that is central to each respective religious tradition.



Representative from the four pilot countries spoke about the issues regarding violence against women in their country and how they planned to implement the initiative.



Ms. Soher el Sukaria, Secretary General of the Arabic- Muslim Society of Cordoba and member of the Argentina Global Interfaith Youth Network, spoke about machismo in Argentina, which is defined as the attitude of superiority of men over women and of

practices and behaviors that are offensive against the female gender. Ms. el Sukaria explained how this prevalent attitude contributes to violence against women in Argentina, as it degrades women and justifies the mistreatment of the female gender. To combat this issue, Ms. el Sukaria, along with the Argentina Global Interfaith Youth Network, will coordinate an Education and Training for religious youth on the issues of machismo, gender inequality and violence against women in Argentina and will be trained on how to effectively address these problems.

Mr. Parthipan Palanisamy, Youth Coordinator of Shanti Ashram and member of the Indian Interfaith Youth Network, spoke about the dowry system in India, which puts great financial burden on the daughter's family and leads to female feticide. He also spoke about the general discrimination and violence against women and particularly young girls in India. As part of the initiative, Mr. Palanisamy, along with members of the India Interfaith Youth Network, will hold forums at various universities to educate youth on the religious principles of inalienable rights of women and girls and how youth can advocate for an end to violence against women and girls. Additionally, members of the India Interfaith Youth Network will engage in direct advocacy and lobbying with the Indian government for stronger enforcement of laws prohibiting the dowry system. Additionally, Mr. Palanisamy stressed his hope to strongly engage young men in India to participate in the initiative.



Ms. Johanna Mae dela Cruz, Co-coordinator of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines Youth Desk and member of the Philippines Interfaith Youth Network, spoke about the need to increase awareness and engagement of religious leaders and youth in the Philippines to advance the prevention of violence against women and girls. Additionally, Ms. Mae dela Cruz addressed the widespread discrimination of women and girls in the Philippines and the high prevalence of domestic violence against women. Through the initiative, the Philippines Interfaith Youth Network will organize seminar training programs on the religious principles of respect of women and girls and their inalienable rights and how religious communities can advance these rights. Additionally, participants will be educated on the patriarchal culture in the Philippines that renders women inferior and subject to abuses, as well as the primary actions to prevent violence against women and girls in the household. Additionally, the youth network will coordinate the production of resource guides on domestic violence against women and girls and how religious communities can prevent violence against women.



Ms. Nyambura Gickuki, Youth Coordinator of the African Council of Religious Leaders – *Religions for Peace* and member of the Africa Interfaith Youth Network gave an emotional speech on sexual violence against women in Uganda, explaining that 1 in 3 women in Uganda experience sexual violence in their lifetime. She invited everyone to look around the audience and realize that if there were all women from Uganda, 1 in 3 would have been raped, subjected to female genital mutilation, or forced into sex slavery. To address the issue of sexual violence in Uganda, the



Uganda Interfaith Youth Network will implement a training of religious youth to educate them about the problem of sexual violence against women and girls in Uganda, and train them on how they can advance the rights of women and girls in Uganda by educating the larger community about the issue. Throughout the year, the trained religious youth will return to their communities to educate the public about sexual violence against women and girls in Uganda and the need to advocate for the full protection of women and girls from sexual violence.

After the presentations, Ms. Azab presented the Restoring Dignity – Religious Youth Say No to Violence Against Women website, Facebook page, and online pledge. She called on all attendees to visit the website, make use of the resources, join the facebook page, and share the online pledge with their communities. After reading the pledge to the audience, a hard copy was distributed to the audience members who all signed their pledge to restore the dignity of women and girls.

Dr. Lilian J. Sison, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* – Philippines, delivered the concluding remarks. Dr. Sison expressed solidarity with the youth in implementing the initiative and the importance of religious communities advocating for the full protection of women and girls from violence. She stressed the global aspect of the initiative and the hope to engage all regions in the world in restoring the dignity of women and girls. Finally, Dr. Sison congratulated the Global Interfaith Youth Network for their launch of Restoring Dignity – Religious Youth Say No to Violence Against Women.



Participants of the Launch holding the signed Pledge



MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES | COMMEMORATING INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

On 24 November 2011, youth from *Religions for Peace* Philippines, in collaboration with the *Religions for Peace* Asia Pacific Women of Faith Network, commemorated the international day to end violence against women at the Focolare Center in Tagaytay city, Minneapolis Center (Center of Peace). The young people presented songs on peaceful co-existence, and a number of speeches were offered on restoring dignity, including remarks from **Ms. Jacqueline Ogega**, Director of the Women's Mobilization

Program of *Religions for Peace* and **Dr. Lilian Sison**, the Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Philippines. The youth led participants to make the restoring dignity pledge.



WARSAW, POLAND | PRESENTATION OF RESTORING DIGNITY - RELIGIOUS YOUTH SAY NO TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TO THE EUROPEAN INTERFAITH YOUTH NETWORK

On 17 September 2011, **Mr. Daniel Calder**, Program Officer for Youth and Network Coordination at *Religions for Peace* International, and **Ms. Daniela Malec**, Coordinator of *Religions for Peace* European International Youth Network, presented Restoring Dignity – Religious Youth Say No to Violence Against Women to the European Interfaith Youth Network during their summit in Warsaw, Poland. Mr. Calder explained the initiative, while Ms. Malec gave a presentation on violence against women in Europe and her experiences as a volunteer at a women’s shelter for victims of abuse. Mr. Calder and Ms. Malec



provided various examples of how the European Interfaith Youth Network can engage in the global initiative and implement activities that restore the dignity of women and girls. The European Interfaith Youth Network will have future consultations and meetings on how they can contribute to the initiative in 2012.

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES | PRESENTATION OF RESTORING DIGNITY - RELIGIOUS YOUTH SAY NO TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TO THE NORTH AMERICAN INTERFAITH YOUTH NETWORK

On 11 September 2011, **Mr. Daniel Calder** presented the initiative to *Religions for Peace* North American Interfaith Youth Network. Members of the network expressed strong interest in the initiative and plan to actively participate by implementing an activity, such as a Day of Action, to address the issue of violence

against women in North America and educate religious communities on how to advocate for the protection of women and girls from violence.

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA| PRESENTATION OF RESTORING DIGNITY - RELIGIOUS YOUTH SAY NO TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TO THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN INTERFAITH YOUTH NETWORK

On 31 August 2011, **Ms. Soher el Sukaria** presented the initiative to members of *Religions for Peace* Latin American and Caribbean Interfaith Youth Network at their annual Executive Team meeting. Members provided feedback on how Argentina can effectively implement their activities. Further consultations and meetings will be held to discuss how the initiative can be implemented in other regions of Latin America.