

RESTORING DIGNITY

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

Religions for Peace

Newsletter Highlights

July 2011- June 2012

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

The Restoring Dignity website can be visited 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 and TWITTER

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. Restoring Dignity recently launched a Twitter account that can be followed on @restoringdignity and is actively tweeting about campaign initiatives and activities.

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.

I. Introduction

Religions for Peace has worked for over 5 years, with different partners including USAID, UNIFEM (UN Women), UNFPA, UNICEF, United Nations Foundation, Ford Foundation and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to address Violence against women and girls. Some tools have been developed, most notably the restoring dignity toolkit for religious communities to end violence against women accessible online and the USAID training manual on mobilizing religious communities to respond to VAW and HIV/AIDS. The strategy was to introduce inter-religious programming for VAW with focus on violence against women as it intersects with other development challenges such as HIV/AIDS, maternal health or the millennium development goals. The restoring dignity initiative that was launched in 2009 is an ongoing process to engage religious leaders and communities in efforts to end violence against women. Restoring dignity has engaged youth in a very minimal way, through the youth poster competition, where young people have created posters with interfaith messages on restoring dignity.

The work done so far has laid the foundation for “**Say No to Violence against Women**” that aims at generating greater youth leadership to take action on prevention of violence against women and girls. Building on lessons learned and milestones achieved through the Restoring Dignity initiative and the youth led Arms Down! Campaign, the initiative launched a youth-led campaign to build the capacity of religious youth of different faiths to advocate for prevention of violence against women and girls. By combining the power of youth and the power of religion, the youth engaged faith and local communities in order to educate, mobilize, and advocate for primary prevention of violence against women and girls. The project addresses violence relating to harmful cultural practices as well as sexual violence used as a tool of demeaning the dignity of women and girls. The religious youth engaged with senior religious leaders, local officials, national and district enforcement agencies to advocate for implementation of existing laws.

In partnership with UN Women, *Religions for Peace* launched “Restoring Dignity - [Religious Youth Say NO to Violence Against Women](#).” The campaign, led by *Religions for Peace* Global Youth Network, builds upon *Religions for Peace* Restoring Dignity Initiative by mobilizing youth around the world to advance common action to end violence against women. The campaign was officially launched on October 12, 2011 in Manila, the Philippines, during a ceremony led by the IYC. The goal of the campaign is to increase awareness and engagement of religious leaders and youth within faith communities to impact prevention of violence against women and girls. It’s estimated that by the end of the campaign, 1000 young leaders would be trained and they would reach out to an estimated 10,000 on messages to preventing violence against women.

At the National level, there are four pilot countries currently implementing activities for the campaign; Argentina, India, the Philippines and Uganda. The Campaign will be led by youth from different faiths not only in the four pilot countries, but also at the regional and global levels.

Argentina

In Argentina, the youth network has been raising awareness on the “*machismo*” culture in Argentina that fuels violence against women. Members of the network are educating the public about gender inequality throughout Argentinean society and the need to end inequality that degrades women and spurs violence against them.

India

In India, the youth network has been organizing education seminars to educate young people about the discrimination against young girls in Indian society and the need for young men to say no to the dowry system in India, which puts great financial burden on the daughter’s family and leads to female feticide.

The Philippines

The youth network in the Philippines has been engaged in initiatives to increase awareness and engagement of religious leaders and youth within faith communities to advance the prevention of violence against women and girls, which stems from the inequality and discrimination of women in the Philippines. The network will specifically address domestic abuse, and are organizing training seminars that will provide trainings on the religious principles of respect of women and girls and their inalienable rights and how religious communities can advance these rights.

Uganda

In Uganda, the youth network has been implementing initiatives to raise awareness about sexual violence against women in Uganda and training religious youth on how to advocate for the protection of women and girls from sexual violence.

II. Summary of Activities and Outcomes

Global



Launch of Restoring Dignity Campaign in Manila, Philippines October 2011

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.

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.



MANILA, PHILIPPINES | LAUNCH OF RESTORING DIGNITY CAMPAIGN

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.

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES | SEMINAR ON RELIGION, SECURITY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION WORKING PROGRAM

The Seminar on Religion, Security and Violence Prevention convened successfully on Monday April 23rd, 2012 with



renewed commitment to continue sharing good practices to prevent violence against women and girls and advance their security. The seminar is the second in a series designed to harvest and animate good practices of women & youth of faith in peacebuilding around the world and linked to women & youth of faith peacebuilding efforts on the ground.

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA- HERZEGOVINA | LAUNCH OF RESTORING DIGNITY INITIATIVE IN EUROPE



The exhibition “The Dignity of Women – Scriptural Reflections”, May 10 2012 Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

RfP European Women of Faith Network launched the initiative in Sarajevo at the beginning of May, marking the 20th anniversary of the conflict in Bosnia. The campaign has a goal of restoring the dignity of women from all faith communities in Bosnia, a country where nearly 50 000 women were raped during the conflict. More than 70 participants attended the

launch, including members of the European Council of Religious Leaders, members of the European Women of Faith Network and the European Inter Faith Youth Network, members of Religions for Peace-Europe, representatives of local authorities, local civil associations and Bosnian women’s organizations. The meeting ended with the launch of a unique exhibition produced by the Religions for Peace European Women of Faith Network called “The Dignity of Women – Scriptural Reflections”. The exhibition relates verses regarding the status and honor of women from the Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian religions. The exhibition aspires to educate religious and secular communities on the role and status of women and in turn help to overcome misrepresentation and discrimination of women.

National

Argentina

The Argentinean Interfaith Youth Network is currently engaging in initiatives to end violence against women in Argentina by addressing the “machismo” culture in Argentina that fuels such violence. Members of the network will educate the public about gender inequality throughout Argentinean society and the need to end inequality that degrades women and spurs violence against them

BUENOS AIRES| 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.

CORDOBA | YOUTH SEMINAR

The youth network is currently planning a youth seminar in the month of May in the city of Cordoba, which will educate participants about machismo in Argentina, and how to combat it by advocating for the rights of all women and spreading the message of respect for women and girls. Young men will specifically be targeted in this seminar. Participants will be equipped with the knowledge on this issue and will be provided specific examples of actions to be undertaken in their communities. Media will be invited to the seminar, and participants will create artwork on the issue to share with their communities.

Upon culmination of the seminar, participants will return to their communities with further knowledge on the issues of machismo and violence against women in Argentina and will engage in concrete action to address these issues.

In the months of March and April 2012, Argentina has been very active reaching out to and networking with other civil society and faith based groups. They have also reached out to the Ministry of Solidarity of Cordoba Province on conducting training seminars on gender based violence. The first series of sensitivity training workshop was conducted in the end of April with 30 youth from faith-based youth groups on how to deal with personal experiences of gender based violence.



Religious Interfaith Youth discussing the impacts of Gender Based Violence in Argentinean society

CORDOBA | JOINT LECTURE

On July 1st in the Islamic center of the Province of Cordoba the Commissioner inspector of the Police department of Cordoba, Claudia Flores and the federal Judge Dr. Graciela Lopez de Filoñuk, held a joint lecture on how to lobby effectively for government officials and law enforcement to enforce laws to protect women against violence. Over 100 youth participated in the event and asked questions on how to move forward to effectively put in place mechanisms that protect the women of Argentina. The session ended

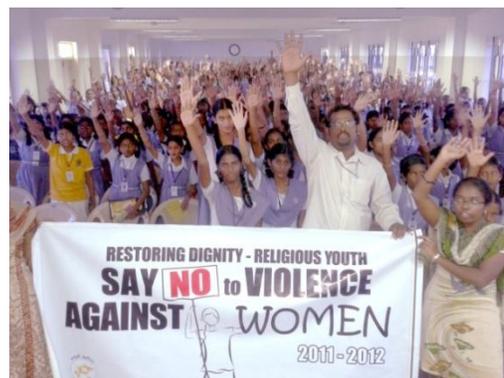
with the Police commissioner promising to hold sensitivity training for her police officers when dealing with women who are survivors of violence.



India

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.



INDIA | SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN AND TRAINING OF YOUTH LEADERS

The youth network is specifically addressing discrimination against young girls in society and advocating for young men to say no to the dowry system in India, which puts great financial burden on the daughter's family and leads to female feticide.

The India initiative conducted in the months of March and April an advocacy campaign to make school and college students and community members aware of existing state laws and moral laws of the various religions for prevention of violence against women. Advocacy materials were developed and disseminated such as pamphlets and videos to inform youth on how to reduce violence against women.

By the end of April, 2012, 9824 children, youth & women were educated on the existing laws and the methods for reduction of violence against women. Additionally, 785 young people in participating establishments were trained in youth leadership development. The trained youth are planning on conducting dialogue with policymakers and law enforcement agencies in the upcoming months to ensure that they give the highest priority to the issue of violence against women by enforcing and upholding the existing laws in India.



120 Youths trained in leadership in Inba Seva Sangam, Sevapur, India.

Presentation of Restoring Dignity- Religious Youth Say No to Violence Campaign at the Saravodaya Leadership Summit



Uganda

Uganda | TRAINING WORKSHOP

Ugandan Interfaith Youth Network (UIYN) choose to focus on addressing Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and the encasing challenge of Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV). According to a 2011 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, an estimated 1 in every 4 young women (between the age of 15-29) experiences sexual violence. What's more, there is a 70% prevalence of violence (sexual, physical or verbal) toward women in Uganda.



UIYN Awareness Workshop in Bugiri, Uganda

Through their pilot-project, the UIYN organized an awareness workshop, as part of a Training-of-Trainers process in Bugiri district. This activity took place at Gilgal guest house and drew over 40 young religious leaders from more than five districts. These included; Iganga, Jinja, Mbale, Busia, Tororo, Bugiri. The awareness workshop was designed to help the

young religious leaders reflect on issues related to Violence Against Women and Girls, their causes and forge a way forward on addressing such challenges at various levels in their localities. As a result, the trained religious youth have thus far been speaking and reaching out to other youth in their district.

UIYN recognized the need to continue with similar workshops and further training in order to equip religious youth leaders in supporting victims and survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV), and preventing such violence. They also propose to work with the youth of that area in order to develop suitable income generating activities, which would dissuade the crutch of poverty as a justification for GBV.



Highlight

One of the highlights of the Restoring Dignity Workshop conducted in Bugiri was that a youth from Iganga district managed to counsel Shamim Mugoya, who felt uplifted and gained hope after a difficult period of her young life. She had been sexually violated on three separate occasions and at times considered suicide as the only viable option. During the awareness training conducted by the Uganda Interfaith Youth Network, she was approached by a youth who attended this session and encouraged her to tell her story. Afterwards she felt empowered to share her life story with other youth in order to make a difference in the community.

The workshop re-energized the youth and made them believe that they can greatly contribute to the prevention of gender based violence of any nature and be able to deal with challenges.

THE PHILIPPINES

See attached newsletter: