

## **Cyber dialogues summary five GENDER VIOLENCE**

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> March 2005

**Theme:** Gender violence

**Panelists:** Noelene Heyzer (Executive Director, UNIFEM), Jessica B Nkuuhe (Associate Director of ISIS-WICCE, Uganda), Cheryl Gillwald (Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, South Africa) and Sara Nordstrom (16 Days Campaign Coordinator at the Centre for Women's Global Leadership)

**Quote for the day:** "... We need to keep reminding the world that violence against women is the most severe manifestation of gender inequality and patriarchy." Sara Nordstrom.

### **1. What steps is your government taking to implement laws on gender-based violence in your country? Are your country's laws adequate or appropriate?**

- A key challenge is reducing the gaps between progressive legislation and policies and actual implementation on the ground.
- There is a lack of specifically allocated resources to address violence against women.
- On the ground, women's activists groups have taken a lead in efforts towards ending gender violence.
- Law reform and new legislation is undermined by implementers who are either unfamiliar with the legislation or who themselves have existing biases which prevent survivors of violence both from accessing available services as well as reporting gender violence.
- Lack of access to and ownership of land results in insecurity for women making them more vulnerable to gender violence.
- Social and cultural obstacles result in many women not speaking out and reporting incidences of gender violence.
- There is still a lack of political will in many countries to combat gender violence.
- Demands should include property rights for women, economic security and decent work for all.
- Micro finance projects for women are not the answer for women's empowerment, but rather increase women's indebtedness.

### **2. Does your country have programmes to deal with perpetrators of violence against women and what suggestions can you make? Do you think that resources should be spent on programmes for men?**

- Men are less likely to be abused in the same way and to the same extent as women.
- Some women's organisations have programmes that assist men who are survivors of violence.

### **3. Can international treaties, protocols and bodies help to protect women in war zones and conflict situations? If so, how can they do this most effectively?**

- There is a need for women's rights organisations in countries where there is conflict to highlight women's specific experiences.
- In situations of conflict belligerents pay little attention to international treaties and protocols.
- Women are particularly and more susceptible to sexual violence during war and conflict.
- The best way to protect women in war zones is to end impunity against violence against women.
- Despite the information from Darfur and the Sudan on the extent of rape and other forms of gender violence, this issue still remains at the margins of peace negotiations.

### **2. Do you think that the UN Protocols on Trafficking are adequate? What do you see as the major issues? What can countries do to stop trafficking?**

- Anti-trafficking and anti-violence laws in the Philippines exist, but there are problems with implementation.
- The implementation of trafficking legislation should not be used as a pretext for anti-immigration and asylum laws.
- Despite the existence of numerous international protocols and treaties, enforcement is limited and violations continue.
- There is a need to link the issue of trafficking to that of economic security and lack of protection and rights of migrant workers.

### **4. Action points**

#### *Legislation, policy and implementation*

- Provide gender sensitivity training to those charged with implementing legislation eg police, judges, and health workers etc to deal with existing biases.
- Use elections and the power of women's vote to challenge political leadership on what they are doing to end violence against women.
- Develop a culture of volunteerism for victim support.
- Develop and cultivate relationships with "champions" who speak out against gender violence eg the Deputy Minister of Correctional Services in South Africa. In South Africa the combination of a champion, leading male allies and strong civil society gender activism has contributed to gains made.
- Translate UN protocols into enabling domestic laws and lobby governments to domesticate protocols.
- HIV/AIDS national strategies must include concrete funded actions related to reducing violence.

#### *Awareness raising*

- Use public campaigns such as the 16 Days of Activism on Gender Violence Campaign to highlight issues.
- Raise awareness about the women's specific experience and increased vulnerability to violence during conflict.

#### *Women in conflict situations*

- Explore ways in which international instruments can be applied in peace negotiations.
- Ensure that issues of sexual violence and rape are central to peace negotiations.
- Work with the media to raise awareness about gender violence and to use radio to provide with information on their rights and where to go for help.
- Publicise and ensure that the promotion of international treaties, protocols and conventions is continuous.

*Trafficking*

- Lobby governments to ensure that the development and implementation of laws on trafficking is not used as a pretext for anti-immigration and asylum laws.
- Link the issue of trafficking to the problems of economic security and lack of protection and rights of migrant workers, especially those who are forced to be illegal migrants.

*Media and ICTs*

- Harness the use of ICTs for women's advocacy work.
- Initiate intergenerational discussions with young women on violence against women and find out how to use their "net savvy."

*Other recommendations*

- Develop strategies which create the conditions for women to overcome social and cultural obstacles and speak out about gender violence.
- Identify the root causes of women's powerlessness and tackle poverty.
- Develop a more "bottom up" approach by involving grassroots women in the identification, development and implementation of projects and programmes.
- Build legal aid clinics in remote and rural areas so that women can have access to them.

**5. Results of the poll question**

The majority of the people who responded to the poll question felt that involving men in the fight against gender violence is an important new development and the only long term solution.

