

a global voice
for women

Soroptimist



International

[AWAWARENESS](#)

November 2011

MONTHLY FOCUS FILE:

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MILITARISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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AWARENESS

November sees the start of the annual 16 days of activism against gender violence which runs from November 25th (International Day Against Violence Against Women) until December 10th (Human Rights Day). The 2011 theme is:

"From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!"

For this reason, we have chosen Militarism and Violence Against Women as the theme of the November monthly focus. We hope that the information provided here will help you in planning what actions your club will take to mark the 16 days of activism.

How is Violence Against Women Defined?

The United Nations defines Violence Against Women (also known as gender-based violence) as:

"Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

Violence against women includes (but is not limited to):

- Gender-based domestic violence
- Rape, marital rape and incest
- Forced marriage
- Female genital mutilation
- Murder and assault including dowry-related violence and honour killings
- Human trafficking including cross-border prostitution rings and bride kidnappings
- War crimes including rape as a weapon of war

Violence Against Women is a public health issue and a violation of human rights. It results in a wide range of physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health issues for both men and women, compounded by women who are afraid to report the violence she faces. With little access to healthcare, education and opportunity, many women are left open to abuse.

Up to one in three women experience physical or sexual violence in their lives. Research shows that women with lower social-economic status and fewer years of schooling are at greater risk. Often, women and girls who have not been educated lack awareness about their human rights. They also find it difficult to access support services - particularly health care.

From: www.thepixelproject.net

What is "Militarism"?

To explore some of the deeper social structures that promote and perpetuate violence against women and girls, last year the [Center for Women's Global Leadership](#) (CWGL) launched a multi-year campaign theme on the intersections of militarism and violence against women.

While there are many different ways to define militarism, the working definition of the CWGL outlines militarism as an ideology that creates a culture of fear and supports the use of violence,

aggression, or military interventions for settling disputes and enforcing economic and political interests.

Militarism also privileges certain violent forms of masculinity, which often has grave consequences for the true safety and security of women and of men who do not conform to these roles. Current world events - including military interventions, femicides, attacks on civilians participating in political change, ongoing conflicts - exemplify the distinctive way in which militarism influences how we see our neighbours, our families, our public life, and other people in the world.

Even in places where there is no recognised conflict, militarised violence against civilians by uniformed personnel takes place. Sexual violence is one tool that might be used to assert power over others. Individuals in positions of authority may believe they can commit crimes with impunity, and this is exemplified by high rates of sexual violence within the military, threats by police to women reporting cases of violence or assault, violations committed by peace-keeping forces, and violence against women living and working around military bases.

The Center for Women's Global Leadership have produced an information sheet on Gender-Based Violence by State Agents. Available [HERE](#) in English, [HERE](#) in French and [HERE](#) in Spanish.

From: www.16dayscwggl.rutgers.edu

ADVOCACY

Soroptimist International has developed a series of position papers on issues of importance to our mission and vision. Below is the 'Where We Stand' statement on Women and Gender Based Violence.

Women and...gender-based violence

Soroptimist International is committed to support all actions to end all forms of violence against women. Violence endangers women and girls physically, mentally, emotionally and economically, perpetuating and reinforcing unjustifiable inequalities in all aspects of women's lives. In addition to the damage to women and girls, violence against women negatively affects families, communities and countries.

Soroptimist International urges governments to:

- ratify and implement all international conventions and treaties which directly and indirectly address violence against women;
- intensify efforts to prevent violence against women;
- ensure that law enforcement has adequate resources and training to respond quickly to all incidents of violence against women with gender specific compassion, understanding and respect;
- provide timely and effective resources and appropriate support services to victims of violence, including safe shelter, access to legal services and medical and psychological treatment without cost to the woman;
- provide special services to migrant, disabled and indigenous women who have experienced violence;
- ensure that women living as refugees are protected from violence and have access to appropriate support; and
- inform the public at large about the rights of women and sources of assistance for women who have experienced violence.

Soroptimist International supports:

- projects that prevent violence against women and address attitudes that allow the violence to continue;
- initiatives that ensure refuge, protection and rehabilitation for women who have experienced violence; and
- education for young people about human rights and healthy relationships.

Soroptimist International will:

- **raise awareness** about violence against women in all its forms and its destructive nature on women, families, communities and countries;

- **advocate** for full, meaningful, and sustainable government accountability and responsibility for protecting women and girls from acts of violence and for ensuring adequate and accessible support services, including legal services, safe housing, and mental health care; and
 - **act** to implement international, national, and local level projects aimed at ending violence against women and supporting women who have experienced violence.
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Peace Women - Women for Peace, Peace for Women

The PeaceWomen Project promotes the role of women in preventing conflict, and the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security. PeaceWomen provides a hub of information sharing on women, peace and security. When planning your campaigning and advocacy actions for the 16 days of activism (starting on November 25th!), you may find the below facts about militarism useful as talking points upon which to centre your advocacy "ask".

Facts about Militarism's Impact on Women

War and militarism disproportionately impact women and children. Whether forced to migrate due to conflict or targeted for sexual violence as a weapon of war, women and children bear the greatest costs. Here are some facts:

- Of the 50 million uprooted people around the world, women and children comprise 80 percent of the world's displaced persons by war and conflict.
- Civilians account for 80 percent of casualties of small arms.
- A 2001 study found that nations with greater gender equality were less likely to use violence in times of international crisis.

Rape as a Weapon of War

- In Rwanda, half a million women were raped during the 1994 genocide.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, up to 50,000 women of all ethnic groups were raped in what the International Criminal Court found was the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war.
- Up to 64,000 women were raped in Sierra Leone by armed combatants from 1991 to 2001. Half of internally displaced women who had direct contact with combatants were victims of sexual violence.
- Half a million women have been raped in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the past decade.

Impact on Women's Health

- In approximately 80 countries around the world, women are daily threatened by landmines, as women are the majority of those who gather food, water and firewood.

- According to our grantee partner Eco Center, in Eastern Kazakhstan where the Soviet Union tested the equivalent of 20,000 Hiroshima bombs, 1.5 million people have been exposed to nuclear poisoning and their entire food system contaminated. Cancer rates there are five times higher than the national average.
- In a study of the impact of chemical warfare on women, researchers found that Vietnamese women who were exposed, or whose husbands were exposed, to toxic herbicide dioxin 'Agent Orange' experienced high rates of miscarriages and congenital birth defects. Two-thirds of their children had congenital defects or developed disabilities in their first year of life.

Impact on Children

- War is the primary factor in the creation of child refugees.
- In the past decade, conflicts and wars have killed two million children, wounded 6 million, and made 12 million children homeless.
- More than 300,000 boys and girls are "child soldiers." Many of the girls are often forced into sexual slavery.
- In Nepal, when Maoists forces last February 2010 discharged 3,000 minors from their People's Liberation Army, 1,000 were girls.

Taken from: www.peacewomen.org

UN Secretary General Remarks for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.

Young Males Must Break from Ingrained Generations-old Behaviour, Secretary-General Stresses at Event Marking Day for Elimination of Violence against Women

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks at the event to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in New York on 23 November:

"We are all aware that violence against women and girls takes many forms. It includes rape, domestic violence and harassment at work. There is abuse in school, female genital mutilation and sexual violence in armed conflict. This violence spans the globe. And it is predominantly inflicted by men.

These are the facts:

Whether in developing or developed countries, the pervasiveness of this unacceptable violence should shock us all. Violence — and in many cases the mere threat of it — is one of the most significant barriers to women's full equality.

All women and girls have the fundamental right to live free of violence. This right is enshrined in international human rights and humanitarian law. And it lies at the heart of my "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" campaign.

Since its launch in 2008, the campaign has galvanized Governments, civil society, the corporate sector, athletes, artists, women, men and young people around the world. The social mobilization platform “Say NO — UNiTE” has recorded more than 2 million activities worldwide — from protest marches to public awareness campaigns, from legislative advocacy to assistance for victims.

Many of these activities have received support from the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. The Fund is now 15 years old. It has delivered grants worth \$77 million to 339 initiatives in 126 countries and territories.

Our challenge is to ensure that the message of “zero tolerance” is heard far and wide. To do that, we must engage all of society — and especially young people — in particular young men and boys. Too many young men still grow up surrounded by outmoded male stereotypes.

Two years ago, I launched a Network of Men Leaders to address this issue. Older men should set a good example in saying no to such violence. We need to promote healthy models of masculinity. But, to do that, young men and boys must be encouraged to become the advocates we need. We need this generation of men to make a break from the ingrained behaviour of generations.

The theme of this year’s International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is youth leadership. Wherever I go, I try to meet — and listen to — young people. I am always impressed by their energy and resolve to make our world a better place. On this International Day, I urge Governments and partners around the world to harness the energy, ideas and leadership of young people to help us to end this pandemic. Only then will we have a more just, peaceful and equitable world.”

END

ACTION

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign:

November 25th - December 10th

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991. Participants chose the dates November 25 (International Day Against Violence Against Women) and December 10 (International Human Rights Day) in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasize that such violence is a violation of human rights.

This 16-day period also highlights other significant dates including November 29, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, December 1, World AIDS Day, and December 6, which marks the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre.

The full 2011 Take Action Kit is available for [download](#) here - including a 'How To' guide for your event, including specific ideas around the theme of militarism. Are you planning an event? Use the on-line campaign calendar to share and promote your event by visiting:

<http://16dayscwg1.rutgers.edu/campaign-calendar/submit-your-2011-16-days-events>

Another excellent site for resources and information is the [Say No UNiTE website](#). Say NO – UNiTE is pleased to present 16 actions that you can take, wherever you are, to mark the 16 Days of Activism. Pick as many as you like, or take the action of the day

Green Scarves for Solidarity - Afghan Women's Network

On 5th December 2011 governments will be at a Conference in Bonn, Germany, at which the peace process in Afghanistan will be an important focus of discussion. The women's movement in has long used green scarves in their campaigning to symbolise their movement – so Channel 16 in partnership with the Afghan Women's Network is calling on people to wear green scarves in solidarity with the women of Afghanistan as part of a photo petition that we will deliver to ministers before they attend the Bonn conference.

The Afghan Women's Network is asking the international community to:

1. Use their influence to ensure women have an effective voice and role in all levels of the peace process: national, provincial and district level.
2. Work with the Afghan government to ensure that all the human rights in the constitution are upheld in any peace settlement. Including women's right to an education and the right to participate in political life with a guaranteed 25% female quota in parliament.
3. Increase support to development programmes that promote women's political, social and economic rights and wellbeing.

NOTE: The petition is now closed. Follow the outcomes of the conference here:

<http://ch16.org/2011/12/05/world-leaders-meet-to-decide-the-future-of-afghanistan/>

Taken from: <http://ch16.org/afghanwomen>

[LINKING TO EDUCATE TO LEAD](#)

As Soroptimists we have lobbied and supported the UN resolution 1325. This was the first international agreement to specifically recognise the impact of armed conflict on women and their crucial role in peace building. This has been reinforced by statements from the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on issues like violence against women and the recognition by the UN of rape as a weapon of war.

When we look at the scope of these resolutions and statements, they encompass so much of what we advocate against: violence against women; forced marriage; rape; FGM; dowry related violence; human trafficking and sexual slavery. Meeting Sameen at the recent SI of Great Britain and Ireland conference and hearing her heart breaking story makes the words of the UN resolutions come alive. Here is her story:

Sameen was taken away from her family as a young child but was returned to her mother when she was only seven. She was then repeatedly abused - this culminated in her being forcibly held down whilst her mother cut the muscle under her tongue to 'cure' her stutter. When she was 12 she was sent away again and forced to marry. She came back to England aged 14 as a mother with a young a son. She realised about three years later that her son was now also being abused by her husband and so she fled. Her husband sent men after her but luckily the police stopped them and found bats and swords in the boot of their car. She said that they meant to kill her, and send her body to her family as a debt of honour because she had brought shame on her family.

I tell this story because so many of us have heard stories like this before. They reinforce our commitment to do something about it. How can we help?

Educate: make sure you know about [resolution 1325](#). Follow up on this knowledge by visiting the websites mentioned in this monthly focus and in the July monthly focus, and then talk about it wherever and whenever you can. These are not comfortable subjects and they are culturally sensitive, but as a women's organisation it is necessary that we speak out and educate others.

Empower: mentor and encourage women into public life. Support your local women's refuge and see what actions your club can take to empower the women living there. Arrange for women in leadership roles to share their experiences through public lectures and talks.

Enable: use your networks to put forward women into positions where they will be involved in peace-making. Ask governments why there are no women at the peace table and challenge them to create more opportunities for women to engage in these discussions.

Always be prepared to stand alongside those suffering violence of any kind. Help them to become a survivor.

Hilary Ratcliffe

International Programme Director

P.S Please do share your views on the Monthly Focus File through [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or via [email](#). We look forward to hearing from you.