



FAWCO UN Report

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Location: Palais des Nations, Room XXII

Program: The Role of Men and Boys in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Format: Moderator//Panel

Organization: Permanent Missions of Canada

Speakers: Mr. Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees; Mr. Dean Peacock, Sonke Gender Justice Network; Major General (retired) Patrick Cammaert and former advisor to UN-DPKO and commander of MONUSCO; Dr. Michael Gurian, Michael Gurian Institute; Mr. Michael White, I am a Kind Man program, Canada

FAWCO related issues discussed:

The 16 Days of Activism is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991. It brings together UNHCR, partners, persons of concern and host communities worldwide in a united call to end sexual and gender-based violence in all its forms. According to meeting speakers, the 2013 16 Days of Activism underscores the importance of involving men and boys to achieve meaningful and long-term change. The meeting brought together a diverse group of speakers who are actively involved in efforts to reduce violence against women and girls through the engagement of men and boys.

The panelists related the common mindset that violence against women and girls is deeply disturbing despite efforts by various agencies, is transcultural and that training and education at political and civil society's fundamental level is imperative to change current mindsets about the topic.

Mr. Antonio Guterres gave a very passionate introduction saying that society needs a cultural and mental shift away from stereotypical ways in which violence against women and girls is viewed. He went on to say that humanitarian organizations have a certain weakness on the topic of violence against women and girls; that these organizations have programs, and people who manage the programs, but stated he feels these people don't feel concern "from the bottom of their hearts" for the violence taking place against women and girls. Groups and organizations should do more, act more, and not simply write programs and marketing materials. He stated that there must be a "change in thought pattern" in the organizations, civil society and in the work place if progress is to be made.

Guterres went on to give examples on how engaging men and boys has had a positive effect. For example, in Sudan focus groups have been held for men to interact with the community regarding female genital mutilation (FGM). Studies show a reduction in FGM in the area since the focus groups began. He cited that work with men and boy survivors has also had a positive impact.

Retired Major General Patrick Cammaert opened his commentary by saying, "after 39 years in uniform I was not prepared for the sexual violence I saw when I was sent to the Congo in 2005." He added, "It is now more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in modern day wars."

Among Cammaert's efforts to decrease violence against women and children are extensive training classes for troops and a mobile cinema.

“Rape is an extremely cheap weapon, but has vast and far-reaching effects. With the single weapon of rape, soldiers and militants can disrupt and destroy the fabric of society. Rape sows fear; it spreads sexually transmitted disease. It excludes women from participation in civic life,” Cammaert. He went on to express that it is well known that conflict creates a climate for rampant sexual abuse and victims caught up in the conflict are among the world’s least accessible people in some of the most remote regions but also mentioned there are concrete, effective solutions to this problem.

To attack violence in these conflict areas, in cooperation with various UN agencies and external organizations, extensive sexual violence training is taking place in conflict areas via a two week course offered to troops. Since April 2011 more than 500 military officers have been trained in seven of the top UN troop-contributing countries, as well as in two multi-country regional trainings. Hundreds more have been trained in over a dozen other countries, as these trainings have been incorporated into courses on gender and peace operations and protection of civilians, as well as regular courses for contingent commanders and mission leadership. Training is for both men and women. Hence, women talk to and serve as role models for other women.

To raise awareness among the local population, the mobile cinema concept was put into place. Mobile cinemas are taken from village to village to show the local people a film on sexual violence.

Mr. Dean Peacock also spoke of using media to educate and promote awareness about sexual violence. Via print, television and radio they reach more than 15 million persons per day. They have partnered with other women’s rights groups to work with drama and soap opera writers who incorporate the topic into storylines. “Community education via the media works,” Peacock said.

Dr. Michael Gurian’s work focuses on gender difference and bringing neuro-biology and brain research into homes, schools, corporations, and public policy. His part of the panel focused on nature versus nurture concept. He also introduced that peace keeping agencies must work more with religious and tribal groups saying that those groups must be kept in forefront because they reach millions of men and boys. He spoke of teaching a more feminist framework model to help sensitize men and boys about violence against women and girls.

Mr. Michael White mentioned social disparity faced by many Anishinaabeg tribal members. That they suffer poor education, high unemployment, substance abuse/addiction and domestic violence at rates higher than the general population. These are symptomatic social characteristics reflected in nearly all communities that suffer long occupations by foreign armies. He added that residential schools omit tribal teaching which are an effective way to teach boys and girls tribal culture of nonviolence. The Anishinaabeg have reached out to schools and community groups to raise awareness about sexual and family violence. The I Am A Kind Man group teaches both men and boys to engage in nonviolent acts. He showed a short, touching video of interviews with tribal men who expressed that the outreach has changed helped them become better fathers and husbands.

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