



serving overseas Americans
and the international community since 1931

Human Rights Task Force Ending Violence against Women

Since co-founding the Ending Violence against Women and Children Task Force (now a committee of the Human Rights Task Force) in 2008, Karen has focused on educating FAWCO members about domestic violence, and empowering them to make a difference in the lives of those suffering at the hands of the very people who should care for them most.

Domestic violence is far-reaching, difficult to talk about, even with close friends, and thus often hidden.

- Around the world, at least 1-in-3 women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime. Most often, the abuser is a member of her own family.
- Every 9 seconds a woman in the US is assaulted or beaten.
- Based on reports from 10 countries, between 55% and 95% of women who had been physically abused by their partners had never contacted non-governmental organizations, shelters, or the police for help.

Statistics are shocking; stories make it real. If 1 out of every 3 women is affected by domestic violence, surely you know someone affected. Have you heard their story? Have you supported them? Local resources are a great support, but what about leaving the country, with the children? Would it be possible?

Fortunately, Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center (AODVC) connects women with legal professionals who advise on international laws. The AODVC (www.866uswomen.org) can be reached internationally toll-free from 175 countries. The center serves abused Americans, mostly women and children, in both civilian and military populations overseas.

Paula Lucas, founder and executive director of AODVC, is herself a survivor, and has written a moving memoir: *Harvesting Stones: an American Woman's International Journey of Survival*. Her memoir chronicles her 14-year journey overseas and her escape back to the USA with her children to flee domestic violence and child abuse. Her mission to assist other Americans abused abroad led her to found AODVC and work tirelessly to transform it from a grass-roots organization to an award-winning non-profit, which has served thousands of victims around the world.

In 2009, we formed a partnership between FAWCO and AODVC which has led to over 40 informational and training sessions of global ambassadors around the world who educate FAWCO members and local citizens about domestic violence and AODVC services. It also supports victims of sexual assault overseas (www.sashaa.org).

The best human relationships are characterized by mutual respect, open communication and individual empowerment. We envision a life where every woman's intimate partner treats her with dignity, respect and compassion; where oppression is replaced with equality; where expression of anger is non-violent and where children grow up in violence-free homes with their self-esteem intact.

For more information on AODVC, contact Karen Lewis at aodvc@fawco.org