STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A Historic Walk and Event

November 2012
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Yangon, Myanmar

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International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Myanmar 2012

16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence is an international campaign to raise awareness about gender-based violence as a human rights issue at local, national and international levels. It begins on 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ends on 10 December, Human Rights Day.

On the 25 November 2012, Myanmar witnessed an historic walk to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. 450 women and men peacefully took to the streets of Yangon to raise awareness about violence against women and to promote its prevention. This book offers a selection of images, memories, and quotes to commemorate that momentous day in Myanmar’s history and to support collective efforts to bring about an end to violence against women and girls.
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank each and every person and organization who took part in the walk and events at Kan Daw Gyi Park on Sunday 25 November 2012 to commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

A special thanks to the twenty three (23) agencies and networks below who effectively collaborated to organise the day’s events:

“Violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable.”

Ban Ki-moon - United Nations Secretary-General

Gathering at 5:30am, the walk began at 6:30am from the front of City Hall. The route started along Sule Pagoda Road to Aung Sun Stadium, up Zoological Garden Street to U Htaung Bo Roundabout, turning right at Kan Yeik Thar Street and walking around Kan Daw Gyi Lake to Natmauk Street, entering Kan Daw Gyi Park at the Bogyoke Aung San Statue entrance.

At Kan Daw Gyi Park, the walkers and additional supporters participated in various events to mark the day, and the 16 Days of Activism that lay ahead. This included an opening speech by a representative from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), a short play by a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender group, a facilitated panel discussion with celebrities giving their views on violence against women, and a quiz.

These activities were Myanmar’s very first combined walk and events program against violence towards women. More than 450 people joined the walk and more than 600 people from over 50 organizations and individuals attended the activities at Kan Daw Gyi Park. It was a wonderful and unique opportunity for collective action and advocacy to end violence against women.
ညောင်မောင်မူ alarmed the international community to condemn the killing of children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) appealed for immediate action to protect children's rights. WCDI has been working closely with the Myanmar Children’s Foundation (MCF) and the Myanmar Women’s League (MWL) to raise awareness and address the issue. WCDI has organized various events and campaigns to bring attention to the plight of children in Myanmar. They have also worked with local organizations to provide support and assistance to affected children. WCDI is committed to ensuring that every child in Myanmar has access to education, healthcare, and a safe environment. The organization continues to advocate for the rights of children and strive for a better future for the children of Myanmar.
Photos of the Public Walk
Violence Against Women and Girls

A Global Problem

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread and systematic violations of human rights in the world. It affects women and girls of all ages, regardless of race, religion, education, income or ethnicity.

Accepted as part of private life or culture, the perpetrators are often someone a woman knows.

In conflict-affected communities women and girls are often raped, sexually harassed, trafficked for sexual exploitation, and subjected to forced labour.

Violence against women deprives countries of human capital and hinders inclusive development. Tackling violence against women is an integral part of progress towards peace, security, and economic prosperity for any country.

1 woman in 3 will be raped, beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime.¹

13% of women across a number of developing countries suffer moderate to severe physical violence, during pregnancy.¹

Nearly 50% of all sexual assaults worldwide target girls aged 15 or younger.¹

8 out of 10 women and men in Lao PDR and more than 7 out of 10 women in rural Thailand and Samoa agreed that there are reasons that justify a man beating his wife.²

34% of women in Vietnam reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.³

40-70% of female murder victims in Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the USA were killed by their husbands or boyfriends.¹

Some 800,000 people are trafficked each year across national borders, most destined for sexual slavery. About 80% of them are women and girls, and up to half are minors. Human trafficking is the third most profitable criminal activity after illicit trade in drugs and arms.¹

From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World
Commitment to ending violence against women and girls is growing, led by a strong global network of women who work to put violence against women and girls on the agenda of policymakers, and encourage many to speak out against violence.

Ending violence against women and girls is about understanding and challenging the root causes of violence and the complex unequal power relations between women and men that exist across different cultures and societies. Culture, tradition and religion must not be used to inhibit participation or to justify violence against women and girls. Women and girls must be supported to be full and equal participants in all areas of society.

Men, whilst at times victims of violence themselves, are widely documented as common perpetrators. Men must be supported to understand why violence is not acceptable, and to see their role in ending it.

Dedicated budgets and long term action plans are needed. Governments must ensure that comprehensive laws and policies exist and are implemented. Health and Justice systems should be strengthened to provide effective non-judgmental support for survivors.

We respect men who respect women

Real men are never violent against women

Involve Men to Fight Violence Against Women

Respect Women’s Dignity

Harassment is a form of violence

Love your Mother, Wife, Sister and Daughter
သင်ကြားနေသော အခြေခံအားလုံးအပေါ် အသေးစိတ်ကြားခြင်း အခြေခံအားလုံးအပေါ် အသေးစိတ်ကြားခြင်း
What the Walkers Said...

“I was very proud to take part in the very first public awareness marching event for the elimination of violence against women. Each step taken was filled with motivation to fight violence against women in Myanmar. I was glad to see men also took part in the event, and though we still have a long journey ahead, I hope together we can end violence against women.”

“I was among the small number of foreign participants who were supporting this cause for all women internationally, as well as in Myanmar and our own countries. It was a lovely feeling that Myanmar which has been isolated politically and economically for a considerable period of time was able to express openly the same message as was being delivered in many countries across the world on the same day.”

“This event is the first step in a long journey - advocating to men to understand their roles in the elimination of violence against women and that it is not acceptable in any form.”
What the Walkers Said...

It was wonderful that this non-political march was able to demonstrate with dignity, in such a quiet, peaceful manner for an important human right. There was enormous interest and curiosity amongst the watching public on the pavements, in cars and buses, very many of whom had cameras ready to photograph this exceptional demonstration. The ways of the world do not change overnight but the nature of this most impressive event will surely contribute to changing attitudes.

“Walking up Sule Pagoda Road in the early morning hours, as part of a sea of people from all walks of life, denouncing violence, along a path that all too recently was turned into a global symbol of repression, is an experience I will never forget. The beauty of transformation, women and men, collectively using their bodies to demand attention to the right to integrity, dignity, and, justice; it felt like a beginning.”
Violence Against Women in Myanmar

- Speaking with women in Myanmar reveals that violence is a common occurrence — both inside and outside of the home. A lack of data makes it difficult to mobilise funds, to devise effective strategies for addressing violence, and to provide adequate support to survivors.

- Reports show high acceptance levels among both men and women for men’s use of violence to show their dissatisfaction with women. Social, cultural and traditional belief systems reinforce a view that women should be meek and accepting of men as leaders and decision makers.

- According to official figures from the Myanmar National Police Service, 654 rape cases were reported in 2012. This figure was noted as the highest incident rate for any crime, after reported murders. However, as many women experience violence and rape behind closed doors and remain silent, it is likely that this figure represents only a fraction of the actual number of cases that occurred.

- Anecdotal evidence tells us that experience of sexual and verbal harassment on public transport, in the workplace, and in schools across Myanmar, are common.

- Women who live in conflict affected areas in Myanmar, or who are displaced or residing in refugee/IDP camps are at particular risk. The Women’s Needs Assessment in IDP Camps, Kachin State\textsuperscript{13} highlighted the problem of violence against women and sexual assault in IDP camps in Kachin State. Furthermore, a recent report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Myanmar emphasised the need for armed groups and the Government to ensure the protection of women.

- The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has designated ‘Violence Against Women’ as one of the key priority areas of its National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013 – 2022 (NSPAW). In doing so, the Government has indicated its intention to develop and strengthen systems, structures, legislation, law enforcement, and practices to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and to respond to the needs of vulnerable and affected women and girls.

- Legislation in Myanmar concerning crimes of violence includes the Penal Code of 1860. This code dates from the British Colonial Occupation. It has few provisions that address gender-based violence; its descriptions and language are outdated and unhelpful to those aiming to seek justice for acts of violence. For example, marital rape is not criminalised if the survivor is over 13 years old - an example of the lack of legal protection for women when it comes to violence. There are no specific laws to prevent domestic violence or to allow women to seek restraining orders. Law reform is required so as to fill the gaps in existing legislation, particularly with respect to sexual violence, and to clarify issues of conflict between laws by superseding inadequate, inappropriate or discriminatory measures. Law reform should provide specific, appropriate provisions addressing domestic violence, workplace harassment, and victim support, where no legislation currently exists. While legal renewal is only one step in the process of implementing CEDAW norms, it would provide a strong foundation for the realization of women’s substantive equality in Myanmar.
Many organisations, including those acknowledged at the beginning of this publication, are working hard to end violence against women and girls in Myanmar. Many CSOs, NGOs, networks, technical specialists, the UN, the Government, and women and men throughout Myanmar are contributing to these efforts. Initiatives include the development of Anti-Violence Against Women legislation, research on violence against women, and advocacy to include women in peace processes and to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. Many organisations are conducting training to build the skills and capacities of women, and to raise awareness about the issue and the importance of ending violence against women. These efforts, along with the operationalisation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women, will contribute to the strengthening of law enforcement, legal mechanisms, policies and much needed support services for women and girls affected by violence.

Gender-based violence and women's livelihoods are inextricably linked. Without safe economic opportunities, women and girls are often forced to resort to risk-taking and dangerous measures to provide for themselves and their families. Conversely, women who do gain employment may face violence at home if their increased income and access to resources is resented by spouses and partners. However, as programs such as those being implemented by Myanmar’s numerous civil society groups demonstrate, and as men become more accepting of women’s new roles, the potential to decrease women’s risk of being subjected to violence grows.
သင်ကြားသည် အချက်အလတ်ကို အမှတ်တံဆိုးအဖြစ် သတ်မှတ်ခဲ့ရာ အချက်အလတ် စီမံခန့်ခွဲခြေ အသင်းအဖွဲ့များ အဖြစ် လိုအပ်သည့် ကြိုးစားမှုတွေကို သက်သာများသော အချက်အလတ် ၏ အကြံပေးမှုများအဖြစ် ကျင်းပခဲ့သည်။

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The Walk

The morning light was soft and slightly misty as we rose and readied ourselves. Donning our purple t-shirts we made our way to the heart of downtown Yangon – Sule Pagoda. There, we were greeted by hundreds of other similarly purple-clad women and men, waiting patiently and quietly in an orderly line, ready to begin the walk. The sight was breath-taking, and I had to stop for a moment to take it all in. There was an outward calm from the waiting walkers, yet the air of excitement and purpose was palpable. We exchanged greetings and shared stories of journeys travelled from near and far.

After weeks of hard work and planning, representatives of civil society, international agencies and women’s networks from across Myanmar came together to hold the very first peaceful walk to mark the 2012 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, an event to commemorate 16 Days of Activism, and events across the country.

Over 450 women and men, wearing purple t-shirts and bearing placards, snaked peacefully, almost silently, through the streets of Yangon. Passers-by stopped, onlookers peered from buses and taxis to read the signs and take note of the purple throng. Police and military officials looked on from the sidelines, quietly observing.

How to describe the feeling of being a part of this event – one of the very first, officially sanctioned marches in Yangon for many years, a march for women? To be walking this path, remembering its past, from City Hall by Sule Pagoda, past Traders hotel, and on towards Kandawgyi Lake. How incredible to be a part of this momentous, historic day, a day that means so much globally, and that here, in Yangon, has other levels and layers of meaning.

I felt so proud to join with other women and men, to raise our voices, whether with words, images, or action, to call for an end to Violence against Women and Girls.
The Time to Act is NOW!

What Can You Do?

GOVERNMENT
- Develop and strengthen anti-violence against women legislation, operationalize the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women, particularly the priority area 'Violence Against Women', and set aside sufficient long term resources to ensure its implementation across all sectors.
- Develop policies for relevant sectors, notably health and law enforcement to implement new and existing Anti-Violence Against Women laws and provide appropriate, accessible and affordable support services for women affected by violence.
- Ensure State Education offers a curriculum that creates space for discussion and learning about violence against women and girls and Women's Human Rights.
- Improve data collection on violence against women and girls.
- Conduct Government public awareness campaigns about ending violence against women.

CIVIL SOCIETY
- Continue to work with Government to support the operationalization of the draft National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women, and to strengthen new and existing legislation on violence against women.
- Organise innovative campaigns and events to increase public awareness.
- Work together, and with the government, to ensure that efforts to eliminate violence against women are well coordinated, long term, and strategic.

BUSINESSES
- Hold gender awareness workshops and information sessions for all employees.
- Make gender awareness a core learning objective for all staff assessment and recruitment processes.
- Ensure there are mechanisms for staff members to talk about and report incidents of harassment in the workplace safe, and encourage open debate and dialogue about this issue.

YOU and YOUR COMMUNITY
- Everyone can do their part to work against violence. Even if you feel you don't fit into one of these categories, you too can support efforts to end violence against women.
- You could hold a meeting or talk with your friends, or family.
- Get together with members of your community and groups in your area to set up a support centre for survivors of violence.
- Run an awareness raising event at your local community centre or school.

DONORS and DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
- Continue to work with Government to support the operationalization of the draft National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women and to strengthen new and existing legislation on violence against women.
- Organise and support campaigns and events to increase public awareness on the unacceptability of violence against women.
- Work together, and with the government, to ensure that efforts to eliminate violence against women are well coordinated, long term, and strategic.
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Photos of the Event
Photos of the Event
16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence” comes to Burma

december 3, 2012

HURFOM: For the first time, women in Rangoon participated in the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence,” a global campaign that kicks off every year on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and concludes on International Human Rights Day on December 10. The campaign aims to demonstrate how women’s rights are synonymous with human rights, and to raise awareness about gender-based violence around the world.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations, women’s groups, and the United Nations co-organized this inaugural event in Rangoon. Opening day, a procession of roughly 250 women and men left Rangoon City Hall at 7am and walked for two hours to the Kan Daw Gyi Park in B Township, where participants gave speeches and shared information regarding the 16 Days Activism, and concluded with a singing of “The purpose of this event is to show the power that women and girls have to stop violence against women,” and “Women want the authorities to solve these problems,” said one attendee.

Many of the rally’s participants donned their traditional ethnic clothing and carried signs with the messages “We Will Have Equal Rights,” “From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World,” and “End Violence Against Women.”

An ethnic Mon woman who joined the event said, “First, I am so happy to wear my Mon traditional clothing among (other) ethnic people. Next, I am glad to take action to protect women from many forms of violence. People may not recognize that women’s rights are still being violated psychologically, that is a violation of her rights as well as the world’s human rights. People are forced to accept the ‘Sorry’ after the victim is abused. For this reason, the authorities need to deal seriously with every case of these violations.”

Written by HURFOM - Filed Under News

New Generations

FIGHT FOR RIGHT TO RESTORE DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA.

Sunday, November 25, 2012

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Written by HURFOM - Filed Under News
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