IAWN Coordinator Ann Skamp asks ‘Dare We Hope?’

This year’s UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW57) met at a time when global media stories highlighted violent attacks against women and girls. Communities were outraged, and demanded full justice and assurances that women and girls be safe and afforded full equality, dignity and respect in all aspects of life.

This context reinforced the priority theme of this UNCSW: The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. It also highlighted that the work of such elimination and prevention can no longer be only for women and girls but is an issue for people in all societies and communities.

As the Anglican Communion delegation joined with all the other delegations at UNCSW 57 we wondered whether this increasing call for the elimination and prevention of such violence signals a change across the world.

Awareness is a first step in this work of elimination and prevention of gender based violence. We have seen some real progress across the Anglican Communion. Action by the Women’s Network as well as the Family and Francophone Networks have seen commitments taken both by the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council to address the issue actively throughout the Communion.

Leaders and many church communities have spoken out strongly against such violence and have implemented programmes to re-educate ourselves about Godly relationships between women, men, girls and boys.

As we live into what it means to be people of the resurrection, dare we hope that women and girls will more and more live their lives in safety and freedom from fear of all forms of violence?

Dare we hope that from these times women, men, girls and boys will seek to live lives in which their relationships are marked by mutual respect and dignity?

Dare we hope that we are witnessing the reign of God breaking into our lives and communities as we take seriously what it means to know each other as being made in the image of God?

Let us all do all that we can day by day to live and work in ways which bring to reality this transformational Christ within us, between us and around us!
Inspiring People

Vijula Arulanantham from the Church of Ceylon reflects on moving worship and the women of Ecumenical Women...

As a member of the Anglican delegation, I had opportunity to be a part of the efforts of Ecumenical Women (EW) in promoting women's rights. I listened to many women of faith who have heeded God's call to defend the oppressed, the marginalized, the poor, the powerless and the voiceless. This impressed on me the vital, unique role of women of faith at UN CSW. Our call goes beyond ourselves. It is God's call to be agents of his justice and peace and is a response to the great love with which God loves us and has commanded us to love others.

Being part of EW worship helped us keep our focus on God and be grounded in God's Word. Each morning we began with devotions at the Church Centre at the UN Chapel and at noon we could participate in a Communion service at the Episcopal Church Centre.

UN CSW was a time of learning, of exposure and inspiration. Events and talks pulsed with the passion of those who had dedicated their lives to struggling for women's rights. The time has come for the Church to rise up and act in obedience to God's call to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly before God.

Spencer Cantrell from The Episcopal Church was inspired by women and men from very different contexts...

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said that human trafficking was modern day slavery. A priest in the USA confessed he had never heard of human trafficking until assigned to a parish in a small town where it was a big problem. Since then, he has helped set up a nation-wide 24/7 human trafficking hotline.

Inspiring stories echoed throughout my time at CSW. An Anglican woman in Seoul, South Korea, goes to the red light district handing out hair barrettes with her phone number hidden in them, going back later to rescue girls who call for help. A woman from Zimbabwe started community income-generating projects to help women gain economic independence, enabling them to stand up to domestic violence.

A South Sudanese woman giving talks against forced early marriage got a phone call from a girl in that situation, and ensured that the girl successfully escaped. A woman social worker from the Diocese of Peru described how she bought diabetes medicine for a gang-leader's mother so that she could get to her client, a schizophrenic woman from a poor family, without being stopped by his gang.

These stories inspire me because they show such bravery, creativity and resolve, recognizing that even a small step can make a difference. Truly they follow the Micah 6.8 call to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly.

I pray that I may keep this lesson with me as I work to end violence against women.

Anglican delegates share how people at UN CSW57 inspired them

‘End of Violence is not the End – Ensure Women’s Equality’

This was the title of Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury's address to Anglicans gathered in New York for CSW57.

Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury from Bangladesh has long been an international champion for gender equality. He has lifted up the role of women in peace-making and advocated for women and girls in the face of growing violence against them in conflict situations.

My impression of Ambassador Chowdhury and his 20 year mantra and commitment for gender equality, was one of deep respect and awe. As a UN leader, he is not a trend or power seeker motivated by ego, in fact he is quite the opposite. His humility and compassion come from his inherent belief – to seek the basic needs for all human beings. He believes we need balance to achieve peace, justice, security, and transformation; that balance includes gender equality not gender representation but 50 per cent of men and women at all levels. Militarism is impoverishing the earth and humanity. Women in protest initiate non-violent freedom, justice and equality, but despite their contributions still face exclusion. Democracy without equality is another form of violence.

A resolution of three words: Women, Peace, Security

As a member of the UN Security Council, Ambassador Chowdhury believes in a resolution of three words – Women, Peace, and Security. We cannot achieve democracy and peace in the world unless women are represented at all levels of society.

After his address he answered questions about gender equality, stressing that the process of equality starts young, within the family. He said:

– Girls, to be empowered to create a better world, you must convince yourself you are equal, not to be a gender role but as a human, inherently equal. Take the opportunity when it comes, assert your point and voice it in class, family and community to empower self and others, to motivate and assert yourself. Always speak up for women's equality.

– Include more women at the table so that people get used to hearing women’s views. Equality will bring transformation.

– Yes, education is important for girls – to change them as human beings, not just to get a degree for a career.

– Women’s special qualities and unique gifts contribute to local communities, national and international aspirations.
Inspiring Anglican delegation

‘My Experience with CSW57’
Claudette Kigeme, Anglican Church of Burundi

My experience with UN CSW this year was another discovery. Previously I attended as a delegate of the Anglican Communion; this year I was an official delegate from Burundi Government with Tearfund.

Since 2009, we have been collaborating with the Ministry of Gender in addressing gender based violence in Burundi. This year, together with the government, we agreed to organise a UN side event at CSW on addressing gender based violence. We got funding and the government put us on the official Burundi delegate list.

During CSW, we were also able to collaborate in NGO side events with organisations like Religions for Peace, UNAIDS, Restored, 28 Too Many, etc - many of which are members of the We Will Speak Out Coalition against sexual violence.

With Burundi delegates, our UN side event was held on March 12, and Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women and UN Under-Secretary General, and Burundi’s Minister of Gender were the speakers. Our Archbishop did not manage to attend, so I spoke on his behalf.

Back home, the President of Burundi invited 15 women leaders to a prayer meeting where he thanked God for the good work God is enabling women to do.

I was privileged to be there with the Minister of Gender, and the CSW session was mentioned and appreciated. There is commitment to strengthen collaboration and advocacy to end gender based violence together.

What have I learnt?

Each year we participate in CSW with the aim of observing, networking and influencing conclusions and resolutions. I have discovered that there is more opportunity to do this as part of a government delegation.

Where possible, I would advise the Anglican Communion to fund their delegates through government official lists because the number of passes for the Anglican Communion delegation is very limited, and this limits its influence.
The story of Jephthah’s daughter in Judges chapter 11 was used as a theme to honour women who have given their lives in service to God and to save others.

Women are sometimes their own worst critics. For us to win the war against violence and abuse, we need to pray for unity and empathy in tackling the diverse situations we face.

Diane Eynon, chair, Anglican Women’s Empowerment (AWE):

The women’s Indaba process was launched with a three-day program at the Episcopal Church Center in New York facilitated through a partnership between AWE and the Anglican Communion’s Continuing Indaba project.

Participants came from the global north and south, different cultures and experiences. We learned that violence against women and girls plays out in different and similar ways but ‘we are one in Jesus Christ’.

Indaba is an organic process, going where the Lord leads and where the group finds itself after deep conversation, prayer, and contemplation; trusting process, facilitators, and one another to do the work that emerges.

We acknowledged that violence is a denial of humanity and that we must recognize and understand that ‘because I am human, you are human’. Restoration comes through God’s love in pathways to healing and wellness.

This will not be the last such Indaba. We are talking about gathering again in a central location in Africa. And we are discussing a parallel young girl’s Indaba program. The aim would be to go even deeper so we could address the key issues that emerged: the need for education, economic empowerment, and breaking the silence.

On the walls were ten grey silhouettes representing women working to end cycles of violence. Too often women doing these kinds of work are unnamed, in the shadow of those they help. During each service, as we remembered these women in our own areas, we were invited to write their names, stories and our prayers, on coloured strips of material to leave at the altar. These were then woven through the silhouettes, so that the shadows they cast were slowly transformed into light and colour.

CSW and the Anglican Communion: Encounter and Otherness

Ilcelia Alves Soares describes how participating as the delegate to UN CSW57 from the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil was important for several reasons. Translated from Portuguese by Mary Caulfield

The chief reason was the tremendous diversity – cultural, linguistic, religious, and political; also deep conversation continually reminded me of Eurídice Figueiredo’s words: ‘What is experience, truly, if not to enter into contact with otherness ? ... letting oneself become the other in the encounter with the other’.

I spent the Commission united with other women in a solidarity that encompassed both our faith and our otherness, all of us determined to break patterns of gender-based violence and to end the conspiracy of silence that persists in faith communities and social structures. I learned that I was not alone: other women were also engaged in advocating for the equitable gender division of responsibilities, in the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

I presented my work on the links between gender violence, theologies that perpetuate violent systems, gender inequality and the spread of HIV/AIDS. As a group we established new links and reaffirmed our activism and advocacy. I was also able to share practical resources and strategies to foster the rights of women and girls in political, economic, civil, religious, social, and educational areas. I returned home with a strengthened commitment to end sexual violence and the spread HIV/AIDS, with new ideas to involve government officials, bishops, lay people and civil society.

A key factor in this dialogue on ending violence against women and girls was its setting: the religious space that was made available for parallel events during UN CSW was more than a mere opening of church doors. For me, it spoke eloquently of the commitment of our Communities of Faith who recognize their responsibility, and ability, not just to prevent violence but also to teach that women and girls have been created in the image of God, equally with men and boys. As we women of the Anglican Communion shared our work stories, we continually focused on elimination of gender-based violence; the hope emerged that new generations could live in a culture of nonviolence. I left the Commission knowing I was part of a larger movement of women returning home to spread what we had learned and work with others, so that we might better undertake the challenges of living in the world of God the Father and God the Mother.
'This will be an International Women’s Day that I will remember for a long time to come,’ writes Mandy Marshall, delegate from the Church of England and co-Director of Restored, an international Christian alliance working to transform relationships and end violence against women.

‘Not just because I shook the hand of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, but also because of the sense of a step change in seeing violence against women ended.’ Mandy continues:

We headed to the UN for the International Women’s Day march. It was snowing, very cold and wet. We were led by actress Susan Sarandon, who read out a letter from Malala Yousafzai, (the girl from Pakistan shot on her way to school) which encouraged us all to stand up for the rights of girls.

Then Ban Ki-moon came on the platform. Everyone cheered. He has taken action from his inception as UN Secretary General to highlight violence against women. He encouraged the setting up of Say No – UNite, which calls on us all to act to end violence against women, along with his network of male leaders to make a stand to end violence against women. Ban Ki-moon did this at a time when engaging men was not as popular as today. Not surprising he is so well respected.

Cold, wet and soggy after the rally with sopping wet feet, I began to leave the march. As I came to the side of the platform Ban Ki-moon was coming down the steps. I suddenly felt like a teenager at a gig with my hero standing so close. I made my way to the front and shook his hand and said ‘thank you’ for all that he is doing - that was all I could think of. Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for leading the way for high profile men to make a stand to end violence against women and say ‘no more’.

Maybe the simple heartfelt thank you was enough. Of course, it’s a moment I will be recalling to my friends and family for a long time to come...

Days like International Women’s Day are needed. They are needed to highlight progress made but also work still to be done. Here’s hoping that next year there will be fewer women abused and killed as a result of intimate partner violence. And here’s to a future free from violence.
I Will Speak Out!

UNCSW is a very powerful experience. Pumla Titus of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa writes about how it has confirmed her determination to speak out against violence and the abuse of women and children.

I unfortunately get discouraged quickly and can lose my vigour. Fighting for the rights of women requires time and dedication. It is worth it!

As a leader of the Anglican Women’s Fellowship in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, I started by openly sharing my own story of shame and worthlessness, during my short-lived marriage. Even though I no longer wanted to be there, I did not want to be seen as a failure not wanting to submit to her husband, disappointing my parents, so I hung on. It nearly cost my life. I thank God for giving me the strength to leave. Many women then opened up about their situations. If I cannot help them, I can refer them to others who can. More importantly, some women just need someone to listen.

This session [CSW57] has given me the strength of knowing that I don’t have to do everything. But by using my voice to speak out, my empathy and knowledge, helps them. The gratification I get, by helping one sister, is payment enough.

I am grateful to the many women who came to share stories at CSW57; those who shared resources have greatly equipped me. I am therefore proud to call myself an activist, and will continue to work within my church, community, country and province to speak out against the violence and abuse of women and children.

To all other activists, I say: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for people.” Colossians 3.23

Taking it all home...

Consider how you may recall and use the following:

* The Statement from the Anglican Communion Delegation at UN CSW57 [http://tinyurl.com/cxho9o9].

The statement released by the Anglican delegation at the end of UN CSW57 urged the Churches of the Anglican Communion to take a number of actions, including to:

- implement ACC Resolutions 15.07 on gender-based and domestic violence and 15.10 on the trafficking of persons
- encourage churches at parish level to become places of refuge and safety and participate actively in addressing violence against women and girls
- create awareness and provide training for clergy and the laity to recognise violence and to address it effectively.

Remember that the Anglican Communion, at leadership levels, supports our work. Read, and use:

* the commitments in the Primates’ Letter to the Churches of January 2011.


Extract from the Primates’ letter:

‘As individual Primates we are committed . . . to raise the profile of MDG 3 (‘Promote gender equality and empower women’); to attend to the training of clergy and pastors so that they are aware of the nature and dynamics of gendered violence; to ensuring the development of contextual resources, including liturgies, for example, for 25 November which is the annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women as well as White Ribbon Day, and the first day of the global ‘16 Days Activism for the Elimination of VAW’. We will work with our young people so that they are enabled to honour themselves and one another as human beings cherished equally by God.’


Extract from the Statement:

‘The ACC seeks immediate action to eradicate this and all forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls, including trafficking for sexual purposes. The ACC especially seeks to endorse, promote and emphasise that the work of preventing and eliminating gender based violence is the work of all – men and women, boys and girls. Although often considered a ‘women’s issue’, it is the responsibility of all sectors of our communities.’


Bafana Khumalo presented the Sonke Gender Justice Network. A non-partisan organisation, it uses a human rights framework to achieve gender equality and prevent gender-based violence. He noted points required to engage men in this, including:

- creating and implementing education on gender equality and prevention of gender based violence. See their ‘One Man Can’ campaign
- ensuring people know the law & their rights on gender-based violence
- scaling up high quality evidence and bystander interventions
- restricting access to guns and small arms
- engaging men as fathers and provide parent training; reach out to boys who have suffered.
Conclusions Agreed!

The principal output of each session of the Commission on the Status of Women is the Agreed Conclusions on the priority theme set for each year. They contain an analysis of the priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations for Governments, NGOs and other civil society bodies to implement at international, national, and local levels.

Last year, the priority theme for CSW56 was ‘The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges’. The CSW56 session was unable to reach Agreed Conclusions - for rural women – the poorest of the world’s poor! What hope was there this year, then, when the theme was the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls?

But the Agreed Conclusions came - at the last minute!

Mandy Marshall, the Church of England delegate at CSW57, kept a blog at [http://cofeunscsw.wordpress.com](http://cofeunscsw.wordpress.com) for her time in New York. She has kindly given us permission to use extracts for this Newsletter.

The following is taken from Mandy’s blog entry ‘What do the conclusions mean for us?’

### What do the Conclusions mean for us?

1. The Agreed Conclusions place a strong imperative on governments to implement the agreement.
2. They give NGOs and churches an opportunity to lobby their respective governments to put into action what they have signed up to do.
3. Violence against women and girls is characterised by the use and abuse of power and control in public and private spheres, and is intrinsically linked to gender stereotypes. This acknowledges what we know in that violence takes place in the home (private sphere) and IS our business. It is not ‘just a domestic’, nor ‘none of my business’. It is our business. It is our church. We need to speak out.
4. Gender stereotypes are a cause and consequence of violence against women.
5. The Commission strongly condemned invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations. This means we cannot justify violence against women and girls through our theology, scriptures and cultural practices.
6. Prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women and girls that are perpetrated by people in positions of authority, such as teachers, religious leaders... When we see violence happen we need to take action, no matter how hard it may seem.
7. We need to be aware of how unequal power relations between men and women can lead to violence, and make steps to ensure that violence does not result from the decisions we make.
8. Engage, educate, encourage and support men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour. A focus of this

---

CSW was women and men working together to end violence against women. Men talking to men, calling out violence, challenging themselves and their dominant cultural masculinities.

9. Recognise the role the media can play in eliminating gender stereotypes...and refraining from presenting them as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects.
10. relates specifically to addressing and changing attitudes, behaviours and practices that condone gender stereotypes ... and violence against women and girls. This recognises the role that religious leaders can play in changing attitudes and behaviour. This acknowledges the positive role the church can, does and is playing in the UK and internationally in the Anglican Communion to bring violence to an end. Whether it is doing the simple thing of putting posters in the women’s toilets to access help, or going further and teaching and training on how to become a safe church, there is much we can share. The church is about positive change, about transformation, about new life, about freedom. Freedom for the survivor of violence and freedom for the perpetrator in being bound by believing abuse of power is better than love and grace.

Read the full Agreed Conclusions for CSW57 on-line in English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish [http://tinyurl.com/bmr9262](http://tinyurl.com/bmr9262).

They are not simply for governments to implement but for us too.

What do you want to do?
Go to IAWN’s website for an extensive list of resources, including those below:
http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/resources/documents.cfm

Restored: an international Christian alliance working in partnership to transform relationships and end violence against women. Restored aims to raise awareness of the extent of violence against women worldwide, and of what we can all do to end it. Central to this is a vision of transformed relationships between men and women. See www.restoredrelationships.org and for Restored’s ‘First Man Standing’ project, www.restoredrelationships.org/firstmanstanding.

The Working Group on Girls, dedicated to advancing the rights & status of girls & assisting them to develop their full potential. On-line resources include a toolkit. www.girlsrights.org/Welcome

UNIFEM’s Global Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls. Its on-line resources could inform initiatives in your own contexts. www.endvawnow.org

Stop the Traffik (strapline ‘People shouldn’t be bought and sold’) is a global movement fighting to prevent human trafficking around the world www.stopthetraffik.org

The UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) launched to promote the global fight on human trafficking; works with all stakeholders - to support, create new partnerships and develop effective tools. www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html

UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) is a concerted effort to support national efforts to prevent sexual violence and respond effectively to the needs of survivors. www.stoprapenow.org

IAWN Steering Group

Update from Coordinator Ann Skamp

IAWN acknowledges with deep gratitude the contribution of two outgoing Provincial Links: Cynthia Dowdle of the Church of England and Mary Stallard of the Church in Wales. Cynthia and Mary have been Links since IAWN was restructured in 2006 and have made significant contributions to the place and role of women within the church and wider communities in which they minister.

We welcome two new Links: Revd Helen Hall for the Church in Wales and Revd Jasmine Dow for the Anglican Church of Australia. We also welcome Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson who has been appointed the interim Link for the Church of England.

We give thanks to God for the success of Agreed Conclusions from UN CSW57. The Anglican delegation, hosted by the Anglican Communion Office at the UN, witnessed strongly to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as they participated, and engaged with government delegations. Their experience will now inform action within their own churches and communities as well as the wider Communion.

IAWN is now on Facebook!

We are a ‘closed’ Facebook group: to join, please go to www.facebook.com/groups/IntAngWomen and click on ‘join request’. Then one of the site administrators will accept your request.

Anglican Women’s Empowerment (AWE)

While attending UN CSW57, I met Diane Enyon, the new Chair of AWE. The IAWN Steering Group will continue to seek out opportunities where AWE and IAWN can work together.

Anglican Women at Prayer (AWaP)

Phoebe Griswold of The Episcopal Church is in the process of developing a way for Anglican women across the Communion to be able to deepen their relationships and support one another through prayer. Keep an eye on the IAWN Newsletters for more information as this exciting concept takes shape.

International White Ribbon Conference

I am attending the first International White Ribbon Conference in Sydney, Australia, May 2013. Participants will hear about some of the latest global research in eliminating and preventing violence against women. Visit: www.whiteribbon.org.au/events/white-ribbon-international-conference-2013

Editor's Tailpiece

My thanks to all of you who have contributed so generously, and eloquently to this Newsletter – there is a very clear sense of the significance of UN CSW57.

Comments welcome!

The July 2013 Newsletter will profile some of the IAWN Provincial Links.

Elaine Cameron
elaine.ging@gmail.com