

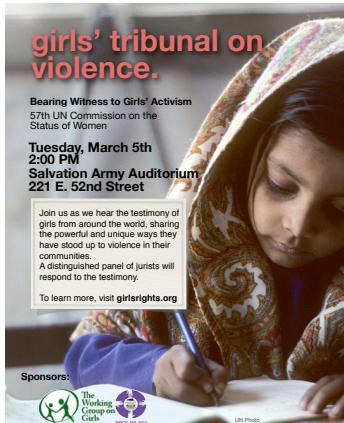
GIRLS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Action for Girls

Newsletter of the Working Group on Girls (WGG) and its International Network for Girls (INFG).

WGG Prepares for CSW 57

Girls Tribunal Is Special Feature of CSW 57



The Working Group on Girls has organized an event, "Girls Tribunal on Violence: Bearing Witness to Girls' Activism" on Tuesday, March 5th at 2 PM at the Salvation Army, 221 East 52nd Street. This event will provide youth delegates an opportunity to interact with girls who have witnessed violence in some aspect of their lives and to learn what strategies they developed to advocate against violence.

Presentations will consist of three panels: one on violence in media, one on violence in communities and one on violence in schools each with three girl "witnesses". A panel of "jurists" will then provide commentary for further discussions in each segment. This year's jurists include noted film maker Abigail Disney, UN Women's Deputy Secretary General Dan Seymour and former Girl Delegate Faith Meitiaki of Kenya.

WGG Girls Tribunal Chair Sally Dunne notes that the Tribunal is "a unique opportunity for teen girls to share the impact that violence has had in their own lives."

Christina Selby, current WGG Girl Advocate, adds, "the Tribunal will also show other girls how they can stand up to violence."



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WGG Membership Produces Advocacy Sheets for CSW 57

To promote its goal of focusing primarily on actions to prevent violence against girls, the members of the Working Group on Girls have met in regular discussion about some of the issues of violence against girls singled out in the UN Expert Group meeting in Bangkok. The result is ten separate advocacy sheets: Child Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Child Pornography of Girls, Domestic Violence and Girls, Girls and HIV/AIDS, Honor Killing, Raping of Girls, Sexual Harassment of Girls and Young Women, Son Preference and Trafficking of Girls.

Each issue sheet includes statistical information; best practices; actions that should be taken by the UN, governments, businesses and NGOs; and some useful documents.

These sheets will be used as talking points at our Mission visits, distributed at our Teen Orientation and will be used by members at parallel events to assist focused interventions that emphasize action.

Our advocacy sheets can be found on our website at www.girlsrights.org.

WGG Recommendations for CSW 57

Despite commitments made, girls are denied their political, economic, social and cultural rights and subjected to behaviours that hinder their physical, psychological, spiritual and social-emotional development.

As CSW 57 meets in the shadow of the First International Day of the Girl (11 October 2012), The Working Group on Girls has prepared this joint statement and calls upon Member States, UN agencies and our civil society partners to keep outrageous and violent practices in the forefront of discussions.

We highlight research findings documenting how the harmful practices of son preference, FGM, early and forced marriage and commercial sexual exploitation impact girls' physical, reproductive and mental health showing:

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Advocacy Mission to End Breast Ironing in Cameroon Is Organized

The silence about breast ironing has been broken. What used to be done in the dark has been brought to light. Women and girls are beginning to talk about it in churches, cultural women groups and schools. Gender Danger (www.genderdanger.com), an NGO founded by journalist Chi Yvonne Leina, has embarked on an extensive advocacy mission to end breast ironing in Cameroon.

Breast ironing is the pounding of a pubescent girl's breasts, using hard or heated objects, to make them stop developing or disappear in order to attempt to protect the girl from sexual harassment and rape, to prevent early pregnancy or to allow the girl to pursue education rather than be forced into early marriage. The incidence of breast ironing in Cameroon is, I think, one of every two Cameroonian girls. The campaign kicked off in the North West Region of the country about six months ago. Almost everybody identifies with the practice, even pupils in primary school.

Our first stop was at the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) Ntamlung, Bamenda, a women's association within the Presbyterian Church. At the mention of breast ironing, every woman knew what it was about. Some confessed that they had been victims and also perpetrators. Interestingly, the women did not know that this practice was harmful. To them, they are merely keeping their daughters from the eyes of sex predators.

While we were at CWF, the medical personnel in our team disclosed the health risks of breast ironing, and behold, mothers wept at their ignorance. They could not imagine what they see as help can adversely affect the lives of their daughters. Some women started telling their stories: breasts ironed years ago refused to grow again; their daughters' breasts have grown extraordinarily big after the ironing; or their daughters' breasts have grown in an unimaginable way, one very big and one very small or one with a hole in the middle.

I wept when these women revealed what they had been doing to their daughters and what they had experienced themselves as victims of this painful and traumatizing act.

At another CWF meeting, I cried again when the women started listing the different methods they used to iron their daughters' breasts: grinding stones heated on fire; hot bananas; hot broken pieces of clay pots; herbs; or hot cutlasses.

At the Government Bilingual Primary School GMI Group 1, in Bamenda, more than 90% of the pupils revealed they know about breast ironing. One of the pupils explained how her breasts were ironed using a grinding stone. Many others said they have witnessed it being done either to their sisters, or to other girls in their community. Teachers testified as

victims and as perpetrators. The pupils of this school were taught how to resist breast ironing. They were told to tell their mothers that they should not iron their breasts, no matter what. These children carried placards and sang songs on campus denouncing breast ironing. They saw genuine reasons to stand against breast ironing.

The breast ironing campaign going on in the North West Region of Cameroon has now shifted into full gear. In December 2012, Gender Danger organized a workshop

to train women who will become community actors/advocates against breast ironing. This campaign, organized in partnership with the Regional Delegation of Women's Empowerment and the Family North West, will train about 40 community actors. Similar capacity building workshops will be organized in different regions of Cameroon to fight this practice.

Chi Yvonne Leina says, "Gender Danger is also planning to initiate a media campaign and free screening and treatment of breast-related diseases in hot spots of breast ironing. Also we are planning a sensitization march against breast ironing early next year. We are also looking for financial support to help intensify the work. My heart cries for the restoration of the self-esteem of these young girls and women. Mothers should begin talking to their daughters about sex and not destroying their bodies".

Nakinti Besumbu Nofuru

– MA Student, Women and Gender Studies,
University of Buea



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Message from Haiti: Girls + Art = Empowerment

In January 2010, an earthquake killed 250,000 people in Haiti. More than three years later some 1.6 million people still live in displacement camps built of torn tents with limited availability of food and water.

Nadia Todres, a photojournalist specializing in humanitarian issues, went to Haiti in April of 2010 to document the crisis. Soon adolescent girls became the focus of her lens and her efforts to assist the people of Haiti. She began teaching photography as a means to empower girls living in the camps and provide them a creative outlet.

Knowing what many young people in Haiti needed most was a source of income to help feed their families, in January of last year Nadia founded the Center for the Arts as a place where girls could not only learn different art skills but also produce items they could sell.

The Center is in an area of Port au Prince called Siloe, which is home to 20,000 people including 800 families displaced by the earthquake. The program began with 20 adolescent girls who study art, photography, English and gender-based violence/empowerment skills. With the encouragement of Frantz Zephirin, a well-known Haitian artist, painting has been added to their studies. The Center hopes to add another 30 girls to its study program this year.

In August 2012, the wind and rain of Hurricane Sandy destroyed thousands of tent homes in Siloe, forcing 14,000 residents to evacuate. The Center reallocated all funding for its programs to feeding families and everyone, teachers and students, pitched in to help.

The Center recently affiliated formally with the Haiti Adolescent Girls Network, which is dedicated to creating “safe spaces” for girls in Haiti and provides training to those who are mentoring the girls.

To follow the activities of the Center and its girls, visit <http://www.facebook.com/centerforheartspap>.



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Copyright Nadia Todres

WGG Recommendations for CSW 57, cont.

(a) higher rates of childhood mortality/severe physical health complications; (b) higher rates of HIV/AIDS; and (c) poorer mental health outcomes.

- **Girls who are missing** because of son preference, (female feticide, infanticide, malnutrition and neglect). In 2011, the WHO reported that although a sex ratio at birth of 102 – 106 is typical, rates of 130 males per 100 females are documented.
- **Girls who have been harmed** by female genital mutilation (FGM). In 2010, the WHO reported that approximately 100 to 140 million females have experienced FGM.
- **Girls who were forced into early marriage.** In 2011, the Population Research Bureau indicated that over 60 million girls are married before the age of 18.
- **Girls murdered in the name of honour.** The UNFPA estimates that 5,000 females are murdered annually in the name of honour. Women’s groups have estimated the number is closer to 20,000.
- **Girls who have been trafficked** for commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). In 2012, the ILO indicated that 98% of those who are victims of forced sexual exploitation are female, with children under age 18 accounting for 21% of the total.

WGG Recommendations for eliminating violence against girls:

1. Criminalize Offenses and Close Gaps in Law Enforcement;
2. Provide Resources and Funding for Gender Equality and Girls’ Empowerment;
3. Promote the Participation, Visibility and Empowerment of Girls;
4. Raise Awareness and Promote Community Involvement;
5. Collect, Analyze and Disseminate Data on Girls;
6. Identify and Share Best Practices;
7. Ensure Access to Education and Schooling as a Human Rights Imperative. Effective approaches must promote the competence and resilience of girls and include their social, political and economic empowerment through education programs and job training.

(See the full statement with details at <http://www.girlsrights.org.>)

Yvonne Rafferty
– Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

Action for Girls

Meet the WGG Girl Advocates



Christina Selby is a junior at the Nightingale Bamford School. This is her second year as a WGG Girl Advocate. Christine works on the Girls Participation Task Force, the Steering Committee, and helps with the WGG Twitter page.



Anita Benn is 16 years old and was born in Brooklyn. Her parents are from Ghana; her mother is her role model as she is a single mother with three children. Anita goes to Academy of Mt. St. Ursula where her favorite subjects are math and chemistry. She dreams of working in marketing, advertising or becoming a lawyer. Her favorite subjects are math and chemistry. She is ambitious, dedicated, outspoken and loves the feeling of accomplishing a challenge.



Julia Lee is junior at Trinity School, and is thrilled at the opportunity to be able to participate in CSW 57. She serves on the WGG Taskforce on the Review Theme as well as on Girls Learn International. She recently traveled to Bangladesh for a month and learned a lot about the issues that women and girls face, especially in less developed countries. That experience made her realize that there are girls like her who are prevented from having the same kinds of opportunities that she has. Julia would like to change this by being involved with diplomacy and advocacy for underrepresented groups at home and around the world.

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Editorial Committee

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Carolyn Donovan – American Association of University Women

Jackie Shapiro – ECPAT. USA

Laila Morgan – Girl Advocate

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Please address questions about the articles to the authors at
wggcontact@gmail.com Reprinting of articles is encouraged with credit given to Action for Girls. We welcome articles by NGOs.

Kimberly Huang goes to Hunter College High School in Manhattan. She joined WGG because she has always believed that everyone had the right to express herself. However, she realizes that many females in numerous countries, even in the U.S., are denied that right due to cultural, social or personal limitations. So, Kimberly is working with WGG in hopes that she can make a difference for girls on this issue.



Lizzy Hibbard is studying acting in her junior year at LaGuardia High School in New York City. She is co-president of her school's chapter of Girls Learn International, a nonprofit that facilitates schools in the U.S. to partner with schools in the developing world. She is also a Girl Advocate for the Working Group on Girls. This is her first year participating in the CSW.



Laila Morgan is a junior at Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn Heights. She volunteers in a variety of organizations working with children. This is her first year as a Girl Advocate. Laila is part of the Communications Task Force and helps put together Action for Girls. She also assists in managing the WGG Facebook page.



WGG at work