

January 2013

Dear Grail Women around the World,

The Grail Link to the United Nations Network is getting ready for the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**, which is scheduled for **March 4 through March 15, 2013**.

We believe that the topic this year is one that concerns all Grail women, which is **the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls**.

We encourage all Grail women and groups to make a study of the topic, to discuss it with each other and to research information about it in your country.

What follows below are excerpts (in the boxes) from a speech given by Michelle Bachelet, the Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, at a Stakeholders' Forum in December to prepare NGOs for the upcoming CSW. We pose some questions related to her remarks for you to use, if you choose, to explore and study the topic of violence against women and girls in your Grail circles or individually.

The entire speech is available as well as videos of other presenters at <http://www.unwomen.org/2012/12/policy-makers-and-survivors-take-center-stage-at-stakeholders-forum-on-ending-violence-against-women/>

This paper is for your own use with your Grail group. We are not collecting answers, but hope you will share with us your experience of working together to learn more about the challenges and the successes in eliminating and preventing violence against women in your community and country.

We would love to know if it is useful to you and your Grail community that we provide this material. Does this process help you feel connected to the work the Grail is doing at the United Nations?

We send you our love and thanks for your support of this important work—at the local, national and international level.

and meditations as well as the work of healing the wounds of women and girls and making the world a place where such wounding is no longer tolerated or created.

The Grail Link to the United Nations Network:

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## Grail CSW Study Paper 2013

“These preparations are vital for a successful 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Most importantly, they are vital to women and girls around the world who are counting on us and our governments and organizations to deliver and to keep our promises to advance women’s empowerment and gender equality.

This is such important work to end violence against women, the value of which we cannot underestimate.”

What are your main concerns about violence against women and girls in your community?  
What resources are available for prevention and elimination of violence that affects women and girls?

“Today at least 125 countries outlaw domestic violence and there is a large body of legislation on violence against women and girls. There is international agreement on the way forward as articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action. However, we know that the lack of implementation remains a key issue, and so does accountability.”

What are the laws in your country regarding domestic violence? Is there legislation as well regarding human trafficking or other injustices that greatly affect women and girls? Are the laws being implemented? And if not, how are authorities made accountable?

“We also know that culture and religion can never be invoked to justify violence against women and girls. This was voiced by several delegations in this stakeholder meeting. Wherever I go, I hear this same message from religious leaders and scholars, including, most recently, from Islamic scholars, whom I met in Jakarta, Indonesia.”

Are you aware of cultural or religious justification for violence against women and girls in your community and in your country? How have they been challenged to change?

“We need to listen to the voices of women. There is nothing more real and profound than hearing from women, in this case, women survivors, whose stories inspire all of us to stand up for justice and human rights and to do more to prevent, address and end violence against women and girls. I thank the women who joined us yesterday from Brazil, Colombia, Turkey, Australia and the United States and shared their stories. Stories about the spectrum of violence – from violence related to conflict, to domestic violence in the home, to violence in the name of honour, to child sexual assault to human trafficking and sexual slavery.”

Are women’s voice heard in your community? Are there means for women to tell their stories in a safe setting so that they have the opportunity to “speak truth to power.” Are there small spaces (church circles, women’s groups) where women are encouraged to speak about what has happened to them?

“If violence against women is to be tackled effectively, its root causes have to be addressed. Such root causes include patriarchal culture, sociocultural practices, unequal distribution of power, and women’s financial dependence on men, among others. When such root causes are addressed, sustainable solutions to end violence against women can be reached.”

What do you see at the main root causes of violence against women and girls in your community? In your country? How can they be addressed most effectively?

“We know, for instance, that women who face multiple forms of discrimination are particularly vulnerable to violence, including specific forms such as economic violence and racism. Such groups include women living with disabilities, women living with HIV and AIDS, indigenous women, migrant women, adolescent girls and older women, among others. These groups are too often invisible, and it is crucial that laws and policies have special provisions that take into account their needs and rights.”

Who are the most “invisible” women and girls in your community? How are their rights protected and their special needs met? What conscious efforts are made to remove the cloak of invisibility and to truly see them?

“We know that we have to end the impunity and the ingrained discrimination against women that allow these crimes to continue. And we know that we have to do a lot more to provide comprehensive services to survivors.”

Are you aware of services provided to victims of violence in your community? Are they supported by government funds or private funds only? Are the services widely available?