



The fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 4 – 15 March 2013. The priority theme for this event and for other committees and events associated with it was—

**The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls**

Sessions at the Commission considered strategies and practices to encourage legal and political reforms which favour the safety and dignity of women and girls, awareness raising, promoting public safety, and changing the cultural and workplace environment and practices in the private and public sectors.

While there is progress in the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls and despite the introduction of laws in many countries, attitudes that **normalise** violence against women and girls persist. The horrors of female genital mutilation in African countries (in Somalia the practice is widely accepted, while in countries like Ghana and Benin there are advances in eliminating this practice) and the indignity of trafficking women for sex and domestic slavery fill us with revulsion and a united voice of protest for the human rights of women and girls. The UN Women's Deputy Executive Director, Ms Lakshmi Puri said: "It occurs in all countries, contexts and settings and is one of the most pervasive violations of human rights. Ending violence against women and girls is not about demanding exceptional treatment. It is simply about letting women and girls live in dignity."

**SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT...**

In Europe, domestic violence is a major cause of death or disability for females 16-44 years

In the USA, 3 out of 4 family violence victims are female

In Australia, indigenous women experience what is termed in a cloaked fashion "family violence" at a level that is 6 times that of non-indigenous women

A US Study, *Women in Prison Project*, revealed that 90% of incarcerated women experienced violence in childhood and young adulthood

In New Zealand, the Auckland Rape Crisis Centre found that 43% of their victims were raped by a family member.

Missing women, stemming from female foeticide and sex-selective abortions, is a widespread problem in South & East Asia & the Pacific. The workplace in developed and developing countries is often the scenario where women and girls are bullied, physically threatened and exploited.

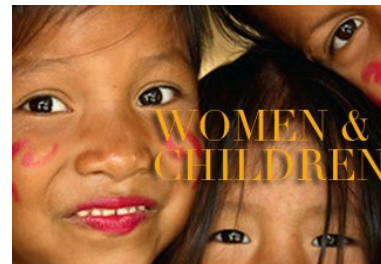
Therefore ALL countries need to examine their foundational legal structures, support systems and access to justice pathways for women and girls so that the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls can become a reality everywhere.

**WHAT CAN I DO?**

Reflect on these concerns and pray for the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Raise your own awareness about these key issues for 2013

Show your respect in a practical way to women who touch your life (e.g. colleagues, shop assistants, receptionists)



**GOOD NEWS .....**

Fortunata Pendo, the young woman who organises the goat project for Caritas Dar Es Salaam, wrote in an email that our Christmas donation has extended the project to ten new women who each received two goats, a male and female, to begin their business. We hope there are numerous kids in the future! She was most grateful for our donation, which you might remember was given in lieu of Christmas Cards 2012. Fortunata has visited the USA recently for studies in psychology relating to change in traditional village structures and mediation.

**Kathleen Butler CSB**