

Decade Festival
Harare, 27-30.11.1998

**PLENARY SESSIONS
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE CHURCH
28 November 1998**

Empty stage . Big bowl, half full with water.

Nine women, carrying water in different ways and in different vessels, approach the big bowl, and as they pour the water into it they say the following words:

African Woman: I bring the tears of African women -
(pouring the water into the big bowl) of those who survived, and those, who never made it.
Our tears as victims of war and internal conflicts. Our tears as women whose story was never told. Our tears as women, struggling to survive because of national debts and global economic control.

Asian Woman: I bring the tears of Asian women; our tears as victims of female sexual slavery and trafficking. Our tears, as those young girls who had no choice.

Caribbean Woman: I bring the tears of Caribbean women; our tears from our homes as beaten wives, the tears of those of us, whose bruises were ignored by the pastor in our church.

European Woman: I bring the tears of European women, our tears as our talents have been stifled and dreams suffocated because the system is built on the power of dominant groups.

Latin American Woman: I bring the tears of Latin American women, the tears as women who have experienced diverse forms of violence in the spheres of work, family and in the public but also in the privacy of our own bodies.

Woman from the Middle East: I bring the tears of the women of the Middle East, our tears as we cry for our children, lost in the war, lost in the fight for liberty.

North American Woman: I bring the tears of North American women, our tears as our theological voices are undermined, and the divisions between that keep us powerless .

Pacific woman: I bring the tears of the women of the Pacific Women, our tears as we watch our Islands being destroyed by nuclear testing and colonisation.



**World Council
of Churches**

Young woman: I bring the tears of all young women from all the continents because the problems each one of us name is common to us all as women of the world.

All nine women together: In tears we recognize each other,
from continent to continent
from country to country
through our tears we look at each other
because of these tears
we stay together
and move.
We will move

Response spoken quietly by all sitting around the tables: Spirit of care, spirit of compassion,
take our tears, touch our pain
heal our wounds, guide our anger
Spirit of care, spirit of justice
make us break
the chain of human sin

Two women on the stage (chosen out of the nine):

(1) We were told,
yes there is violence,
but not in our circles,
not in the church
not in Christian homes

(2) And we almost believed it

(1) but then we started to listen

(2) and the church got another face

(1) we learn what we did not want to believe

(2) we heard what we hardly could bear

(1) we know now
there is violence against women in our very midst
in the churches,
in Christian homes

(2) we know now
that violence against women
exists in the church, but
it is ignored by the church
it is even justified by the church

(1+2) we know now
that violence against women
happens in our very midst

5 WITNESSES

(7-10 minutes each, spoken from the stage; during each speech the speaker will be surrounded by ten women sitting on the stage and making the form of a supportive pyramid. After each speech there is a moment of silence and then each round-table is called to say together in a soft, quiet voice "your story is my story, your story is our story")

Silence

Nine women (same as above with their "tears") come up to the stage; touch the water with their hands and let it flow through their hands and say:

In tears we recognize
each other
we will not hide them any more In tears
we look at each other
we will not be silent any more

because of those tears we
stay together
and move
we will move
we will claim that
violence against women is a sin
WE KNOW THAT
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS A SIN!