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**Ecumenical Pre-Conference 2008 Faith in Action Now! – Day 2
Gender-Based Violence and Trafficking
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
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MALE SPEAKER: I am going to go straight on and say that it is a great pleasure to me to introduce the moderator on my right hand side, Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, who is the General Secretary of the World WYCA and to thank her and all the speakers for the presentations that are rich and about to come. So, straight over to you, Nyaradzai. [Applause]

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: Good morning. The headlines we see everyday in our communities, "She was left for dead after gang rape." "A 3-year-Old is in hospital, she was raped." "She has fistula because she underwent female genital mutilation." "The teacher has been acquitted on allegations of abuse of the kids." "The peacekeepers cannot be prosecuted in the countries they are serving."

"She left this morning because the brother-in-law wants to inherit her." "The boy is in the street, he has an STI, he was away abroad and came back yesterday, we understand there are issues about sex with a condom or not." "Our girl has gone to Europe. We do not know which company organized her for her passport. We do not know where she is staying. We do not know but she went away."

It is about violence. It is about risk and vulnerability. It is about relationships and it is about power. It is about restoring the dignity, the best dignity to life. This morning, to walk us through that conversation, a

profound composition about life and a profound composition about what action we can take now, is the panel, a distinguished panel which comes from the diversity of experiences.

We are going to hear from Pauline Muchina, a Senior Advisor with UNAIDS in Washington D.C. We will, immediately after her, hear from Dr. Hernan Quezada, a Jesuit brother and an advisor to the Catholic Church here in Mexico. Herlyn, a youth ambassador from Namibia with the Churches United Against AIDS in Southern and East Africa and Kay Warren, Executive Director on the HIV/AIDS initiative for the Saddleback church. We will then hear the conversation on our tables, a real conversation about what action now and ask specific questions to the panel. Pauline? [Applause]

PAULINE MUCHINA: Good morning. What Nyaradzai has said is so powerful that I think we should take one minute or a moment just to remember all survivors of violence, gender-based violence around the world for their many- and some suffering alone without anyone beside them.

I am very humbled to be speaking to you today. People fade from around the world who are usually the ones who are with these survivors of gender-based violence in most cases. And on behalf on UNAIDS, I want to say thank you to the organizers of this conference for inviting us to participate and to share our perspective on this issue. I will be sharing

on behalf on UNAIDS but I will also be sharing from my own perspective as a Christian woman and as an African women.

I said I am humbled because of the many wonderful work that all of you are doing around the world. Communities of faith have been on the forefront of the AIDS epidemic since the dawn of AIDS. Sometimes even when nobody knew what it was, but you are providing care to those who are sick. You are counseling, you are comforting, and you are taking care of AIDS orphans.

It is still happening today and in some countries like in Sub-Saharan Africa, faith-based communities provide 40-percent of the health services that are in the country. And in most rural areas where the governments do not even have access. Faith-based communities are there. I do not need to go around and tell you everything that faith-based groups are doing because you know and we will be giving examples in the course of our talk.

Unfortunately, many communities of faith are also ill-prepared to deal with HIV and also gender-based violence. Indeed, some religious groups have been known to judge, condemn, and reject people who are living with HIV. For more than one sided prevention education teach gender inequality and male domination and model it through structures, leadership and training in the churches. Marginalized sexual minority

populations in their churches perpetrate gender stigma and discrimination and fail to teach appropriate sex education.

I do not know when you learned about sex, whether your religious community taught you about sex. But, I remember what I learned from church was that sex is sinful, stay away from it. When I became a teenager my body was telling me something different. It was something good. My body could not want it if it was not something good. But, all I had from church was, it is sinful, stay away from it. I was not getting how do I delay sexual debut and save myself and all that. And most of our religious institutions have failed to do that, to many of our congregations.

Most of us are familiar with the way religion has been manipulated and used to perpetrate gender-based violence. I remember when I was growing up in a small village in Kenya, my parents would tell me, you are created in the image of God, therefore you can do anything inside the church and outside the church.

And then I would go to church and I would be told, no, you were created from Adam's rib and you are to be silent in church. Then, you cannot be ordained because you are a woman. All these I had from the church. I had, if you get married, you have to be submissive to your husband. And what they left out was the husband is to love me also as Christ loved the church.

So, I got these double messages. I get it from my parents, empowering me, giving me confidence and then when I go to church I get a completely different message. I do not know what message you got from your church and I do not know what message you are getting from your church today.

Unfortunately, some of these teachings have become the drivers of the epidemic. Take for example, gender-based violence. Under the guides of religion and culture, a silent war is being waged against women and girls. The silent war transcends all borders, all denominations, all countries, it is everywhere.

Women and girls are now at the center of the AIDS epidemic and globally, they make up 50-percent of all people living with HIV. In Sub-Saharan Africa, they make 60-percent of all people living with HIV and 75-percent, I repeat again, 75-percent of all young people living with HIV. We have to pause and ask ourselves, what is really making women and girls vulnerable to HIV infection?

Their vulnerability is exacerbated by factors that disadvantage them. Their socialization and promotion of male dominance in our cultures and in our churches, the promotion of women's lack of control of their own bodies to a point that women, a lot of women and especially young women who are most vulnerable, do not have the power to decide when, how, and with whom to have sex with.

Violence and HIV go hand-in-hand in many ways. Women who have experienced violence are at a high risk of a HIV infection. And women and girls who are HIV positive are at a high risk of violence. Much of the vulnerability of girls and women to HIV can be found in relationships with older men through child marriage, through transaction of sex.

And stories of many women around the world contradict what we hear, that HIV is about sex workers, it is about injecting drug users and it is about people who are practicing risky behavior. But just this week, UNAIDS released the epidemic report and the statistics are showing for example, that in Thailand, married couples are at most risk of HIV infection.

I do not know even how to express to you how many times I have had women say, "I know that my husband was the only person that I was sleeping with and yet I am now living with HIV." Women and girls bear a disproportioned burden in providing care and support to sick families and members and they take the responsibility of also orphaned children.

Another statistic, over 800 thousand people are trafficked every year. Many countries do not have anti-trafficking laws. Trafficking of human person, especially women and girls, especially young girls to be sex workers is the largest transactional crime in the world and yet we have

very little process or very little legal and also political will and advocacy efforts going to stop that.

I know that we can continue to talk about what is happening but I also want to focus on what we can do and what is being done by some of the churches. I want to give two examples of some the churches that are working on these issues. And one of them is Malawi Ecumenical Counseling Center. This council or center has produced a manual to educate religious leaders on how to deal with gender-based violence.

I also want to highlight the Salvation Army which has a program that has established homes for girls, those who have been trafficked. They have programs for rehabilitation. They have training for personnel to address the issue and they have advocacy work. They write to members of Congress or members of Parliament to challenge them to implement laws to protect these women and girls around the world.

At UNAIDS, we believe that to have an effective AIDS response, we need a renewed commitment to prevention. I know that I only have one minute left. So, I just want to say that one of the most important things we must do to stop the spread of HIV is our strategies must be evidenced informed and scientifically supported.

We must embrace human rights approach. We must do much do help women and girls protect themselves and we must encompass the multi-faceted teachings about human sexuality.

And we must address stigma and we must have meaningful engagement of people living with HIV, especially with women and engage men and boys to stop gender-based violence.

Friends, I long for a time when the church will be intolerant about gender-based violence. Teach truthfully and effectively about human sexuality. And at the same time, teach gender equality and most importantly also, accept all people regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, or anything else. Thank you very much. [Applause]

HERNAN QUEZADA SJ: Buenos dias. I am going to show a presentation with a few images, pictures of women faces, Latin American women that I want to be showing while my presentation is going on.

One afternoon, a woman came to the Mission de la Missionary Cordia [misspelled?]. She was about 45 or 50 years old. She had a seven or eight-year-old girl with her. She uncovered her head and she asked, could you keep her? Berdita [misspelled?], the social worker of the mission looked at her with surprise. The girl's name was Lupita and her aunt who was the one that was taking her and her mother as well as the child, has suffered the reality of HIV and AIDS and rapes.

She lived in a very poor section of Jalisco, Mexico and a few years before Lupita was born, his father felt forced, because of the economic crisis in Mexico and the misery and poverty that his family was living, he decided to go to the

United States without legal papers or documents. After a few years, Miguel came back to Mexico to see his family. In that visit, Lupita was born. A few years later Miguel came back to Mexico and Lupita this time, had a little brother.

After living for four months in his home town, Miguel thought about going back to the United States but he did not feel the strength to work. He lost weight and he had fevers. When he went to the hospital, he was told that he had AIDS. Lupita's mother was also told that she was sick. Lupita and her two older brothers also took the test. Only Lupita had the disease.

They were told to take a medicine that they could not buy. They were sent to a hospital in the Capital city but they did not have money to come here. Lupita's father died before his son was born. The mother was very sick and sad and after giving birth, she also died. Lupita's brother was born very weak and he almost did not cry. Lupita's aunt, her mother's sister, took her and her little brothers to her home. The little brother was already too sick.

The aunt's husband found out that his family members had died of AIDS and that Lupita and the younger brothers also had the disease. He was angry so he beat his wife and told her to get rid of the children because they could infect their own. He told her not to come back until she got rid of them. Lupita's uncle was afraid, he did not want her there and

everybody knew that she had AIDS. People did not talk to her. They did not have money to take Lupita to the doctor nor to buy her medicines. Desperate, she took the girl to the Capital city. A woman had talked to her about the Masson. This is a story of a family in a community, the story of a community and of our country that is being affected by HIV by gender inequality and migration.

According to the information of the Sanitation Association, there is about 23 million Mexicans in the United States of America, out of which almost half of them were born in Mexico. 8.5 million are residents and 3.5 are temporary workers of the agricultural sector. Migration leaves them in a very vulnerable position to AIDS.

According to a report of the section of AIDS control in Mexico, a very significant number of AIDS cases come because of their residency in the United States and some of the highest AIDS toll also correspond to states that send migrants to the United States. Ninety percent of Mexican migrants in the United States do not have access to health services. In the majority, they are lonely men in active working age that, adding to the most liberal customs of the place that they are living in and their need of affection that they are living because of their immigration.

They experiment sexual practices that leave them at a high risk of having AIDS and other STD's. The relationship

between immigration and HIV is very complex. Some people believe that it is the immigrants that are already having with them the HIV when they come to the United States. The contrary has been proven. Furthermore, they are more vulnerable to HIV, the immigrants and the local populations, the links between human mobility and HIV is based on the structures of the immigration process.

Some immigrants, they are very vulnerable to the infection of HIV at their destination. This is the case of men working far from their homes and living in places where there are only men. For others, the highest risk is in the process of going there. This is case of Central American women who have to cross through the United States and are victims of violence from the authorities and other people during their journey.

Some immigrants to the United States are facing the poverty, persecution, discrimination, and exploitation, alienation and the sense of anonymity. Their access to social service, education and health is very limited. The separation from their family and their couple, the social norms that lead the behavior of local communities.

So, if they live the situation in another place, why do they leave? Because they are forced because of economical reasons. The new liberal policies and the interest of some people and the lack of possibilities and opportunities in our

country, forces them to immigrate to find a better life conditions for themselves and for their families.

I would like quote the last report of UNAIDS that was presented only two days ago. I quote, "HIV is a biological entity, sensitive to medical intervention. However, the epidemic has continued its expansion, greatly because the social conditions have not been solved that make the vulnerability higher. We present two social factors that increase vulnerability that have not been effectively phased by the majority of countries; Gender inequality and the lack of empowerment of women and young girls as well as discriminations, stigmatization and social marginalization."

These words have the worry that most of us have, that HIV, more than a biomedical problem, it is a social problem based and rooted in poverty and inequality and social injustices. The HIV cases that we see in Mexico have registered and increased in teenage girls who get the virus mainly through sexual transmission, especially in the poorest states and in those in which there is a high immigration toll to the United States.

In Mexico City, there is a woman living with HIV for every five men living with HIV. But, in other states, such as Puebla, Plascala [misspelled?] and Morelos, all in the center of the country, the figure is one woman for every three men that are infected. The social economic statistics confirm that

women are in a disadvantage with respect to men in several different things, for example in education. Although, in the last few decades, the literacy tolls in developing countries have increased significantly, both for men and women.

The latter still do not have the same access that men do to primary education, secondary education or technical education. This situation, together with Machismo, which is still present in various cultures, leaves them in a more vulnerable situation. We have obstacles to women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS because HIV in Mexico is still stereotyped as a problem that is only pertaining to homosexuals. There are very little efforts directed to women and other populations.

So, women do not know that they are vulnerable or that they are at risk with their partner and this is because of the double morality that establishes different rights and obligations for women and for men together with homophobia which leads men to have a double sexual life. A lot of women do now know what the sexual practices of their partners are outside of their own relationship which is why they are not conscious of the fact that they are at risk.

The relationship between the epidemic and migration has been recognized by the United Nations during the extraordinary session in the General Assembly about HIV that took place in 2001. In the 50th paragraph of this report, it said that by

2005, we are supposed to put national and regional strategies as well as international to ease access to prevention programs to migrant workers including access to information about social and health services.

This is the year 2008 and it still has not happened. The challenge is great. Poverty, injustice, discrimination, abuse, fears, old ideas, ignorance and paralyze that mark AIDS and migration. We have questions for our churches. We have to reflect, we have a challenge but we also the possibility of generating life.

I want to quote a letter from the Mexican and United States bishops about migrations. "Our common faith in Jesus Christ leads us to look for a way to find solidarity. It is the faith that transcends borders and that eliminates every form of discrimination and violence in order to have relationships based on justice and love."

And to sum it up, I want to say that borders and inequality are due to our human weaknesses. Each and every one of us is one in Jesus. We are brothers and sisters, children of one same Father who wants life in abundance for all of us. Thank you. [Applause]

HERLYN URJAS: I am Herlyn Urjas. I am going to share my personal life experience today. I am 34 years of age. I grew up with my mother and my step-father. [Inaudible] the time my mother experienced violence from my step-father and I

had to move out of the house and I started to live with my uncle. And while I was living with my uncle, at the age of 14, me and my friends, we had an advertisement at school that there was a school concert at a certain town from our town like 70 kilometers. And then we have decided that we would like to go and join the concert.

By then when we went, we have decided we just go and hitchhike. Hitchhike is the common source that most of the people in Africa are getting a ride. We went and we hitchhiked. On the way, we got truck driver that gave us a ride. We went together. When we reach the final destination, the one guy asked me to escort him and then I escorted this guy and on my way, the guy refused to let me go. He took me to a certain building, he threw me against the wall, and then he hit me and then he raped me.

From then, I went back bleeding and I was in terrible pain. But when I went back to where my friends were, I never told them the experience that I have been through because I was ashamed and I was afraid and I was just quite for a longer period of time. Finally, the concert got over. The next day we drove back to our town and I never shared it with anyone and I was just quiet about it.

And then I made this friend of mine at school. We were in grade nine. And then this friend of mine, she lost her parents and she grew up with her uncle and her aunt. And on a

certain day we have decided in a school holiday, we are going to drive to another town for the holiday. We went to this town. By then when we went to this town, we went to live with her uncle and while we were living with her uncle, her uncle said that we should get back to our town because it was almost time for the school to reopen.

We then went back and on the way back to our town, we [inaudible], we stopped at another town, seven kilos from our town. We stopped there and we were there for a weekend and while we were there, on the radio, we heard that there is a modeling show in the Capital City that is Enduk [misspelled?] and then we have decided that let us go to Enduk. By then we would not have enough cash in our pockets. We were just saving about \$59 mepian [misspelled?]. That is the equivalent that will be around \$6 U.S. And then we have decided that we will just go and hitchhike. Of course, it was the cheapest way to get a ride.

We went to the road, we hitchhiked, we then got two truck drivers, they were on their way to South Africa. They gave us a ride. On our way, the guys told us about how beautiful South Africa is to all the different places where a young person go in South Africa and go and have fun. And then the guy asks us whether we would like to go along and then we said yes because we were eager to go and see South Africa and

if we have to get back to Namibia it will be great, just to know that we have been in another country as well.

Then, we went with these guys. Once we got to the border, the guys put blankets on top of us and they covered us with bags and then we passed the border. Before we passed the border, at the immigration, they went off with papers. The [inaudible] put a stamp on whatever they did there by immigration. A certain man came but then he did not check in the truck, he just went around the truck. He just looked and then finally he left.

Then we drove, we passed the two borders and when we got to a town called Port Chustral [misspelled?], the one guy wanted to have sexual intercourse with me. And when I refused, he threatened me that he will beat me. And I was a 16 year old female. I was not having enough power to defend myself. So, I begged him to use a condom. He took out the condom and he used the condom. The condom might have been expired or he might not have used it correctly because it burst.

After a while, I asked him what he did. He just looked at me and he laughed. I then went to the toilet and I started crying. My friend then came over and she asked me, Herlyn, why you crying? And I told her the condom burst. Then she encouraged me. The next day we drove to Johannesburg with these guys and then I was so angry at the guy who had sexual intercourse with me that I did not talk to him. He refused

that he will no longer buy for us food because I do not want to talk to him. He did not buy for us food while we were staying there.

There was this one guy who was coming to our place where we were staying. And then I told this guy, we need a place to stay because we do not have food, we do not know anyone here. And then this guy introduced us to a certain guy's place. We went to live at his friend's place and while we were living at his friend's place, on a certain day we went out to a evening club.

And then this guy bought me a juice and one our way back, that guy wanted to have sexual intercourse with me. And I told him I came with a truck and the condom burst and at this moment, anything can happen and I am feeling this change in my body. By then he refused and he insisted that he wanted to have sexual intercourse with me. So, I ask him, is it because of the juice that you bought me and I throw the juice away. Then he [inaudible] to me.

And after that, I told him, okay, you can have sexual intercourse with me but please use a condom. But then he said he is not going to use a condom because I was looking healthy, nothing showed him that I have got HIV or I have got another illness, I might be pregnant or I might be facing something else and he refused using a condom with me. He then had sexual intercourse without a condom and when he was through, I told

him if you find out that you have got HIV, I am not the one who infected you. You searched for it on your own and you have to pay the price for the rest of your life.

Okay. And the truck drivers who took us to South Africa. They frightened us in a way that if we was to go and look for help assistance, the people will lock us up because we are not citizens from South Africa. And then I stayed for a longer period of time, going through the experience that I have been through because I have been sick, I have been experiencing a change within my body.

Finally, I could not manage the infection that I was going through. And then I went to the police station. I went to the police and I told the policeman how I got there and the policeman then took me to the hospital and at the hospital, the nurse said, I have a STI. She gave me medication and after few days, the STI was cured. From there, the policeman took me and my friend and we were staying in safety house.

While we were staying in the safety house, my leg started swelling up and it was painful that I could not work. Then, the people from the safety house took me to the hospital and at the hospital they said they will take my blood. They informed me, they took my blood and when the results came back, I was told by the staff of the safety house, that I have HIV without any counseling.

I then recovered. The policemen then deported us back to Namibia. On the way back to Namibia, I never told my family that I was having HIV because I never knew how to convey the message to my family. On our way back, I started getting sick and my uncle took me to the hospital and at the hospital, they said I have TB and I need to take the medication. By then I thought, why should I take TB medication? I do not have TB, I have AIDS. Why should I take these and I was always skipping the medication.

By then, there was this kind counselor who was talking with me. She counseled me and then I told her that I have HIV and then she counseled me, they took my blood and she encouraged me that I need to take the medication because it is worth some help and equally helped me to recover my weight back and so forth.

Okay. Finally, I gained my weight back and at the moment, I am working within the schools and doing preventative work with learners, talking about abstinence and so forth. And I am working as a counselor at the Worfish Grimalie Porpa Center [misspelled?] and working with a group of people living with HIV and I am doing group work with them.

And finally I would like to thank the Church's United Against HIV and AIDS for inviting me and the Lutheran World Federation, sorry, for sponsoring this whole conference.

Thanks. [Applause]

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: Without asking for her consent, I will ask my young sister from Zimbabwe- I will ask my young sister Sophie from Zimbabwe to come here. She is a young woman living with HIV and AIDS to give you a hug.

[Applause]

KAY WARREN: Morning. Thank you Herlyn for sharing your story. There is an outline on your table if you would like to look at it, from some of things, a very brief outline that I will be sharing with you this morning about the role of the church in gender-based violence.

I am not going to ask you to do this, but if I did, if I were to ask you how many of you have experienced personally, sexual violence or abuse, if I would ask you if you would raise your hand, I wonder how many of you would be able to raise your hand because I think statistics tell us about half of the room will have to raise their hand and say I have personally experienced some sort of violence, some sort of sexual violence against me in my lifetime.

And then if I were to say, how many of you know someone who has experienced gender violence, who has had either domestic abuse or gender violence or sexual abuse, that I think the rest of the room would have to raise their hands. And I think at the end of that time, every one of us would be able to realize that our lives have been touched by sexual violence, by physical abuse. Even if you did not know anyone before you

walked into this room, you now have the story of one woman standing in front of you who makes it all very, very real.

Violence against women is present everywhere. Where I live in the United States, it tends to be quiet. We do not talk about it a whole lot, it is secret, it is shameful, it is not culturally acceptable. Everyone knows that gender violence, to beat your wife, to beat your children, to force a woman into a sexual encounter, that it is not socially acceptable in the United States. It happens, it happens everyday to women where I live but we do not talk about it. It is something that is kept very quiet.

Now, maybe you live in a place where sexual violence against women or abuse is much more open. There is still a lot of shame, there is still a lot of stigma, but it is culturally more relevant, more acceptable, you see it happening. One of the studies that I had just recently looked, talked about that in Cambodia, only 17-percent of the police officers who saw a man beating his wife on the street would arrest him. Only 17-percent of the police officers in Cambodia, if he saw a domestic violence occurring right in front of him, would arrest the man.

Well, in the United States, if a police officer saw a man beating his wife, he would be arrested. I could have pride and say well, we do it so much better where I live. That just would not be true. Just because it is hidden, just because it

is more quiet, does not mean it is right, does not make it acceptable whether it is hidden or whether it is in public. It is everywhere.

I have seen it first hand in the last six years as God has led me to become an advocate for people with HIV from Cambodia to the street of the little flowers to the place in Svay Pak in Cambodia where little girls are hidden behind iron doors on a narrow street not much wider than this, just wide enough for a car to fit through.

And I watch Western men and Asian men drinking beer in the warm afternoon waiting for those padlocked iron doors to be thrown open just a little bit later where girls as young as five or six, seven or eight are being held against their will, trafficked there to be given to those men for a price of \$300 U.S. Those men can take those little girls to their hotel rooms, do whatever they want to, to those girls, bring them back at the end of the week as though they are done, thank you very much.

I have been in the street of the little flowers. I have been with the little girls rescued from those prisons, from those places where their bodies and their mind and they psyche were scarred. I have been in Rwanda and sat in a circle of women, all of whom were HIV positive, and yet, even there in that circle of women who all knew that they were positive, those who had been raped in the genocide of 1994, those who had

experienced sexual violence that had led to them becoming HIV positive, that was still secret.

And as I walked from woman to woman, one of them grabbed me, one very frail, obviously sick woman, grabbed me pulled me next to her and she whispered in my ear, Seda [misspelled?] and then she said genocide. She was telling me I am HIV positive which everyone else in this circle is as well so there is a little shame but it is okay, we are all here together. But, what I cannot even articulate is that I was raped.

So, from Cambodia to Rwanda to the women in my own church, I am thinking of a woman in my church, a good friend of mine who was beaten and raped as she went to buy cigarettes one night and left with HIV. I have seen it first hand in my own life. I was molested as a little girl by the son of the janitor in my dad's church. I have experienced this myself. And I felt ashamed and I felt guilty and I felt embarrassed and I felt confused.

Who could I tell? Who do you tell? My church did not feel safe. My church did not feel like it anything to offer to me so I can only project onto the millions of other women who have experienced what I did and much worse as they wonder, who do you turn to? Who do I go to? Who is there to help me? Who is there to help me deal with the shame? Who is there to help me deal with the embarrassment?

Who is there that will raise their voice on my behalf? Who is there that will say this is not right, this is not tolerable, this cannot happen in our homes, in our country, in our churches, in our neighborhoods, in our villages, who will raise their voice? No one raised their voice for me.

Most women have no one to raise their voice for them. It is acceptable even in Christian communities, it is acceptable to treat with violence, to beat them, to abuse them, to neglect their rights, to go completely against what scripture teaches as the way we are to treat each other.

Well, there has to be something for the church because the church is the only hope of the world. There is no other hope. The governments can only do so much. NGO's can only do so much. Relief agencies can do so much. Philanthropy can do so much. But, there is an enormous gap and that gap must be filled with the Church of Jesus Christ. We are the hope of the world.

What does the church have to offer because some people would say well, the church has been a part of the problem. I do not know that we want to turn to the church and ask the church for help. But the church is God's answer. God only has one plan A for dealing with the brokenness in our world and it is through his church.

He has put, if you will, all of his eggs in the church basket. He does not have any other baskets. We are it. We

are the ones that he has called to give a response, to model exactly what it is to be godly men, godly women, to lead in this world in a way that speaks up for as Proverbs 31 says, "For those who have no voice." We are that voice.

What does the church have? What does every church have to give? Let me tell just briefly what your church has. You have three gifts in your church to offer. You have the word of God and the word of God is the truth and as the word says, it is the truth that will set you free.

So, the most important thing that we offer in our broken messed up world, is we have the truth of God. We have what he has revealed to us and it is the truth that sets us free from our hurts and our hang-ups and our habits. I need help being set free from my hurts, my hang-ups and my habits. Some of those that lend to problems in relationships and you do too and we start with the word of God.

The bible also lays out the trinity as a model of relationships that within the trinity, the oneness, the harmony, the unity and yet the equality that was there in the trinity, that existed from time, never started until time never ends. That is what is shown in the trinity is the example of how we are to relate to each other in oneness, in harmony, in unity, diversity and yet honoring within that relationship.

We have the spirit of God, we have the word of God, we have the spirit of God and it is the spirit of God, the bible

says, who convicts of sin, who teaches us that what we are doing currently is wrong, that the things that we thought were okay, that this was a culturally okay thing to do, that it was alright to treat your wife like this, that it was okay to speak to your husband like that.

When we thought that that was all okay, the bible shows us a way of honoring. The bible teaches us that the spirit of God will tell us when we are wrong and then, this is the best part of that, the spirit of God that each of us has as we are believers in Jesus Christ; the spirit of God gives us the power to change. I need help to change. I cannot do it by myself. That is the spirit of God lives in me and begins to convict me of sin and teach me where I need to be different then I begin to have and then we have best of all; we have the people of God.

God has put us; he has placed us in healing communities called churches where broken, messed up people are supposed to be able to bring their whole selves, their authentic selves. He asks that we work together in community, that we link our lives. I will never get better.

You will never get better, you will never face the struggles that you have, the sins, the habits, the hang-ups, the parts that you bring to the brokenness in your own self and in your own relationships until you are willing to link arms with others in that healing community of the community of faith

where you bring your own whole self, you bring your brokenness, you bring the fact that you are messed up and you are willing to be accountable and open and vulnerable.

When we are willing to link with the word of God and the spirit of God and then the people of God, some of the things that are causing gender violence, that cause it to be something that is secret and shameful and hidden and that needs to be brought out into the open, dealt with, talked with, figured out, repentance made, new beginnings started. Those things can happen in the church.

Well, if gender violence is everywhere, so is the church. I want to talk to you just briefly, very briefly and look at four slides. One of them is from Rwanda, because to me, this gives the best picture of the hope of what we have. In Rwanda, tiny little Rwanda, there is, in Kibuye, the Western Province, an area that our church as we have done some work in partnership with the Rwandan churches and the government of Rwanda.

And the next slide shows you that in that area, there are three hospitals that serve about 650 thousand people, three district hospitals. So, if you want health care, you have to walk two days to get to it. It is not easily accessible. But, then there are also 26 little clinics, Saunter de Sante [misspelled?]. And there is not much there but they are a little more accessible.

But, if you were going to get health care, my friends, where would you want to go? I want to show you this. You would want to go to the 726 churches that are in those exact same places. Now, my point, this is about health care, and I will be talking about that in the workshop that we do this afternoon.

But the point that I want you to understand, whatever problem that we are dealing with, if it is illiteracy, if it is poverty, if it is gender-based violence, if it is HIV, if it is orphans, regardless of what it is that we feel that is on our hearts and our call to do something about. If we do not start with the church, we are starting at the wrong end of the equation. The church is everywhere.

What if the churches, what if the 726 churches in that area were able to make some of these changes? What if they took the word of God seriously? What if they decided, we are going to begin to relate to each other in truth and the way that the trinity does, in harmony, equality, submission, honor, equality, and yet diversity, all of that, what if we began to operate in that way? And then what if we decided that we were going to let the spirit of God deal deeply within our hearts, convicting us of sin, convicting us of wrong attitudes and there would be repentance for those.

What if then, in community, with all of the people that were in those 726 churches, what if the people in those

churches linked arms together and said I have a problem here. I do not do this very well, I am struggling in my marriage. I do not know what to do with my kids. I do not know what to do with the desires that are deep in my heart that I cannot seem to live out. What if all of that came together, we would see a change even in that area in gender violence.

Men would treat their wives differently. Women would understand the beauty of the way that God has made them. There would be harmony in relationships. Something significant would happen. Yes, the church is messed up because it is made up of people like me and you and we are broken and we are wounded and we have made messes of our lives and we do not do it alright all of the time and yet, we as this rag tag little band of losers, God has decided that we are his hope in the world.

Gender-based violence will never change just by putting posters up in communities. Gender-based violence will never change simply because somebody makes a law against it. Trafficking will not come to an end just because people will be prosecuted if they are caught doing it. I believe in all of those things and we must do them but my friends, what has to happen is that the community of faith, we as those who are God's mouthpieces, we stand as leaders in his world.

When we say enough, that is it, we will not let this continue to happen unabated on our watch, we will take a stand

and our churches will respond. That is when things will begin to change. That is the only hope.

I have left you, for you to look at on your own, just some of the examples of what we are doing at Saddleback church. We have just begun, we are not experts at it, but everything I have listed there are things that we are doing in our church to talk about gender violence in our church, both in our community and in our congregation, what we are doing about trafficking in our community and in around the world and leave you with this verse, Romans 12:10, this is the goal, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." That is my prayer for us. [Applause]

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: It must stop now. We know friends who have died as a result of violence and at this moment, we would like to take a moment of silence to remember our friends who have passed on, who have lived with stigma and discrimination, either because they were living with HIV and died of AIDS-related illnesses or because they were also living with shame of experiencing violence. And from the YWCA movement, as we take this moment of science, would like to remember our young vibrant woman leader, Vaida [misspelled?] from Uganda, who passed on two months ago. Can we take a moment of silence?

Thank you. We invite you in your groups in your tables for the next 10 minutes, to do two things. The first is like

we did yesterday, have a discussion and come up with one question you would like to bring to the panel. The second is agree on one action which we must take now. As you write that action down and put it in the basket, and the volunteers and adults who collect those actions and together will follow-up on what those actions- how we can follow through on those actions.

So, what we would bring back to the panel is the question but you write one action which you put in the basket and you can also put some of those- we know that you will not be able to get questions from everybody. You also put your questions in the basket who would like to move from this plenary with the full information. So, if we can on our table for the next 10 minutes.

Can we now receive the questions from the floor? Can those tables which are ready to ask questions, raise your hands? Can we identify the tables which would like to- there is a table in the corner there. There is a table in the other corner there, the one full of men, that table in the corner. Yes, can we get your question please? That table first and then we come to this table. Yes? Can you speak loudly?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Sure. Yes, our question is what are the critical barriers for the Christian church to accept gender equality?

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: What are the critical barriers for the church to accept gender equality? That table, yes?

MALE SPEAKER: Where do we go, what do we do after this meeting to create a movement or grounds well of awareness and action to stop gender-based violence?

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: Can I shift that not to be a question but to be a recommendation because the panel may not answer that question. Let us create a movement against gender-based violence as a statement of commitment other than a question. We clap for that? [Applause] Yes? On that table?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Here? Okay. We were discussing, as a table, that a lot of the information was given on gender-based violence and human trafficking were statistics in Africa. And we were just wondering if we could hear a little bit more about Latin America and what the statistics are in terms of gender-based violence in human trafficking and women's vulnerability for Latin America.

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: Latin America experiences.
Yes?

FEMALE SPEAKER: [Speaking in a foreign language]

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: Yes, this table?

FEMALE SPEAKER: [Speaking in a foreign language] most of people are poor. How do get the government to act?

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: How do we get the government to act-

FEMALE SPEAKER: And the action-

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: No the action, no, just the question. How do you get the government to act? The last? Is there any in, it is here. Okay.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Is there anyway that we can change our actions because we put our religious hat when we go to church but then we go to our homes and we change our hats to a cultural hat so that we go to church and say we will not beat anyone and then we go to our house and we beat children or wives or husbands. So, is there anyway to change that double-face that we have?

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: Thank you very much. I would like to turn to the panelists to comment on the questions and once they are doing that, I request you to put your question in the basket and your action in the basket. One minute each. We can start from the [inaudible].

HERNAN QUEZADA SJ: Thank you. Well, about the question which are the barriers on Christian churches for gender equality, I would like to take into account the last question on that table. I think it is our cultural aspects which are not only in our faith communities but also in our societies, in our families. I think the first steps we have to take to begin having this change is in our closest relationships, our families, our friends and start working also in our faith communities.

I think that my experience in Latin America regarding equality and gender participation in our churches, I think in our organization that works regarding HIV and AIDS, there are more Catholic women who are constitute in this network and they have a very active role and I think we are gaining some ground in this position.

But the women have to start taking this leadership position and we as men, we have to have a more active role because in our Latin America context, sometimes we as men are very shy to participate in some situations related to sexuality, AIDS, and faith.

HERLYN URJAS: Okay. How to empower- the question about the government? Okay. What the government can do is that they have to link with other stake holders and then especially also to empower men to treat women with respect and so the men cannot abuse women. Because not only the trafficking side, but most of us women are experiencing violence and if that can be done, then there will be a greater change within our country. Thanks.

PAULINE MUCHINA: I think one of the greatest barrier is the way we interpret our scriptures and the way we also interpret tradition and unless we begin to reinterpret some of the text that talk about gender relationships in a more liberative way, we will continue to see the problem we are experiencing now. Because when you are talking about the

inferiority of women and girls, based on a particular text of scripture, that in essence, give some men the understanding that they can demand submissiveness even when they have to use force. So, that is one of the barriers.

The other barrier is that we have failed to see the link between HIV and gender-based violence. We want to address HIV separately but we do not want to deal with gender-based violence. As churches, we must definitely do that. And also I think there is misplaced priorities in our churches and let me give you a quick example. The Anglican Church in Kenya boycotted the Lambeth conference that just happened this month. The reason, they did not want to go to Lambeth because there was a gay bishop from the United States. They were up in public, the Kenya newspapers were talking about it.

Women in Kenya are dying everyday of gender-based violence and none of them, those bishops, they are my bishops because I am Anglican so I can safely say that and none of them will say why are women dying because of gender-based violence.

How do we get the government [applause] to act? Some of the most important things to remember is that all these governments have gratified for example the protocol to protect people from being trafficked. About 110 governments have signed it.

They have signed the Beijing Platform for Action which supports gender equality. Unfortunately, the implementation is

very slow. And unless there is effective advocacy, not only from the women's movement, but from the churches, this government will not implement.

Some of them have but we engage them on other matters but we do not do effective advocacy with them when it comes to gender equality, gender-based violence and the trafficking of people. So, I hope that when we go back to our churches, we will ask our churches, what are we saying to the members of parliament in our area about gender-based violence. Thank you very much. [Applause]

KAY WARREN: Not fair to have to answer in 30 seconds or less. Some of the things that I think that, as it relates to the church, what the church can do, one, we need to listen to the stories that people are telling to us. Pastors, if you are pastors in this church or pastors in this meeting or you have a good rapport with your pastor, to encourage them to listen to the stories and validate the stories when women come and talk about violence.

It takes a lot of nerve and a lot of bravery for them to be able to even admit that it is going on and then to be treated like what she is telling a lie or she is exaggerating or she probably did something that deserve it and so she should just go home and straighten up, that when church leaders and pastors hear these stories from women, first of all, to

validate them, secondly, make it culturally okay for women to leave abusive husbands.

The bible does not support women staying in abusive relationships and yet I understand that then it creates a dilemma on the other side, where does she go, whom does she go to, who will take care of her? She will not be valued as much in society. Again, that is a role that the church can play.

The role can support and believe the story, the role can support and in her determination to not stay in an abusive relationship and third, the church must provide places for abused women to go so that they do not end up having to go back to their abusive husband because there is no one who will take care of them, no one who will provide for them, those are things that the church can do.

I personally think it is a mistake if we put all of this on the government. God has placed this responsibility first within the church. If the church fails to act and does not do what the church is supposed to do, then the government will have to step in.

But the primary responsibility is on us as believers in Jesus Christ and those are supposed to accurately reflect him in the world and when we are inaccurately reflecting him as a God who accepts violence against others, as a God who turns a blind eye when children are being abused, when children are being trafficked, when women are being drugged and raped.

When we portray God as being someone who finds that totally okay, then we are giving the wrong picture in the world. We need to reclaim the message of the gospel of God's love and care for each person he has made and he cannot do this in- [Applause]

NYARADZAI GUMBONZVANDA: Our theme is Faith in Action Now. I would like to summarize some of the actions that we have agreed we, as the 450 delegates meeting at the Pre-Ecumenical session to the International Aids Conference, we have agreed to one, unleash a massive movement of the people of faith, saying no to violence and saying [applause] no to gender-based violence.

Together, agreeing to take concrete actions to prevent violence and especially gender-based violence, to end violence where it is happening, to provide support in services to survivors of violence, and to build our own capacity within our institutions, within our communities and within our churches, to respond to gender-based violence in the context of HIV and AIDS.

We are also conscious from our conversation, that violence increases vulnerability and risk and especially to women and young people and that we will make every effort to partner with other organizations in ending violence including the United Nations and civil society organizations.

We would like to thank you very much for joining this plenary and making a decision this morning to be part of this plenary. God bless you. [Applause]

[END RECORDING]