



Advocacy Update

Sent September 29, 2010

On Yom Kippur our liturgy reads, "...We have sinned against life by ignoring those who suffer in distant lands" (Gates of Repentance, Central Conference of American Rabbis: New York, 1978). We have a wonderful opportunity to work together with women of many faiths to protect and/or restore the well being and dignity of women worldwide.

WRJ has just developed a new program for sisterhoods, Maternal Health and Fistula, as an implementing partner of the Religions for Peace inter-religious initiative to seek an end to maternal deaths and fistula. Many multi-religious women's groups are implementing the initiative.

Yearly, over half a million women die during pregnancy and childbirth and many more suffer serious injury, such as fistula, if they do not have access to obstetric care.

- Obstetric fistula is a hole in the birth canal caused by prolonged labor when adequate medical intervention is unavailable. The woman is left incontinent and the child is most often stillborn.
- Traumatic fistula is caused by violent rape and sexual abuse.

Take Action to Protect/Restore Women's Health and Dignity

Hold WRJ's new program in your sisterhood. You may also want to invite other women's religious groups in your community to do the program with your sisterhood.

Hold a screening and discussion on the moving award-winning film, [A Walk to Beautiful](#), which is about five young Ethiopian women who suffer from obstetric fistula, are rejected by their husbands and communities, and make their way to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital seeking a cure and a new life.

Advocate: Urge Congress to support the International Violence Against Women Act. Good news! All of our advocacy efforts have paid off! The International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) is scheduled for mark up in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today. Violence against women, particularly rape as a weapon of war, is closely linked to traumatic fistula and maternal health.

Urge your senators and representatives to support IVAWA.

Organize a hands-on service project: Make and send personal hygiene pads to the girls and young women in Sudanese villages or gather and pack the necessary items for clean birthing kits.

Join with the Or Ami award-winning sisterhoods who made personal hygiene pads for the girls and new mothers of Akot and Atiaba in the Sudan. For information, instructions, and help in getting started contact Judy Schwartz (B'rith Kodesh Sisterhood, Rochester, NY) at schwartz179@earthlink.net.

Your sisterhood could also gather and assemble the resources needed for clean birthing kits, which provide needed items to enable safe, clean deliveries. For information about items needed, assembly and shipping, go to the [United Methodist Committee on Relief, UMCOR website](#).

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home

Take action now to take part in the demonstration of the power of multi-religious cooperation in behalf of maternal health worldwide.