



Operation: Michelle

An Initiative To End Domestic Violence

Initiative Patron:
HRH Prince Leonard, Sovereign
Principality of Hutt River

Initiative Organizers:
Sir Edward Rupert, KRO
Sir William Speir, Jr., KRO

6 February 2007

Publication RHRA OP1-2006

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Overview

Initiative Background Information:

On 14 November 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued a statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, observed on 25 November. In this statement, Secretary-General Annan stated:

Violence against women causes untold misery, harms families across generations, and impoverishes communities. It stops women from fulfilling their potential, restricts economic growth, and undermines development. When it comes to violence against women, there are no civilized societies.

Last month, I issued an in-depth study which showed that half of humankind lives under this threat -- in every continent, country and culture, regardless of income, class, race or ethnicity. This is so, even though we live in a world order where human rights have been recognized in law, and guaranteed in international instruments; even though we have learnt that the enjoyment of human rights is essential to the well-being of the individual, the community and the world; even though, at the 2005 World Summit, leaders pledged to redouble efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

Fighting this scourge requires us to change a mindset which is still too common and deep-seated. To demonstrate, once and for all, that when it comes to violence against women, there are no grounds for tolerance and no tolerable excuses.

For years, women's organizations and movements round the world have worked tirelessly to take violence against women out of the private domain and into the public sphere -- into the arena of State accountability. Many States have enacted and implemented effective laws, and provided comprehensive and gender-sensitive services to victims. And there has also been progress in creating international standards.

It is time to take these efforts to the next level. We in the United Nations must play a stronger, better coordinated and more visible leadership role. Member States must do more to implement the international legal and policy framework to which they have committed themselves. And all of us must form strong and effective partnerships with civil society, which has such a crucial role to play on this issue at every level.

Together, we must work to create an environment where violence against women is not tolerated. By mandating me to undertake the in-depth study, United Nations Member States have signalled that they are ready to do that. Now, with the study and its recommendations in hand, we must summon the necessary political commitment and resources. On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, let all of us -- men and women alike -- join forces in this mission.

Providing humanitarian aid to the countries in which its citizens reside is a key mission of the Principality. There can be no greater humanitarian need in this country, and indeed in the world, than the protection of women and children from domestic violence, as well as the protection of men who are also victims of abuse. The statistics are staggering, and the impact on all society is simply too great to ignore.

We will answer the call of the United Nations in becoming an active ally in the War on Domestic Violence. We are calling this initiative: “Operation Michelle.” This is named for Michelle Young of Colorado who was killed by her husband, who then took his own life. She was a friend to Sir Edward Rupert, and our goal is to give her senseless death new meaning by honouring her memory in our rallying cry – NO MORE! Michelle’s death is one of thousands of dead, worldwide who had no voice, no protector. We will provide that voice and shall not be silent until our mission is accomplished. The line has been drawn, and we will rise the challenge to do whatever we can to combat domestic violence in our communities, in our countries, around the world.

There are many organizations today that focus on this issue and they have a wealth of information to provide. What most of these organizations lack is volunteers to help get their work done, funds to advance their mission, and logistics experts to help them coordinate their efforts with others. We envision much of our efforts being the volunteers, fund raisers, and coordinators that allow these local organizations be more effective – in short, we help them be more successful.

We will be an active part of creating an enduring safe haven against domestic violence in all its forms.

Initiative Mission:

The Mission of Operation Michelle is to create an enduring safe haven against domestic violence by engaging individuals, groups, organizations, law enforcement agencies, judicial and legislative branches of governments at the local, regional, and national level to define, implement, and support workable solutions to break the cycle of domestic violence in all its forms.

Initiative Objectives:

The Objectives of Operation Michelle focus on two areas:

1. Breaking the cycle of domestic violence in individual communities everywhere.
 - a. Working with shelters and other organizations for victims of domestic violence to ensure they have the resources to help victims remain safe and break the cycle of abuse;
 - b. Working with law enforcement agencies to educate them on their role in reducing domestic violence;
 - c. Working with the judicial branches of government to develop a zero-tolerance policy related to domestic violence offenders;
 - d. Working with civic, private and public organizations to build coalitions dedicated to actively working to eliminate domestic violence and support its victims; and,
 - e. Working with legislative branches of government to pass laws that improve the rights of victims, and focus on prevention rather than just punishment.
2. Positioning the Principality of Hutt River as a recognized world leader in the global war on domestic violence.

- a. Hosting and facilitating public forums designed to define workable solutions to the problem of domestic violence at the community level;
- b. Sponsoring shelters and programs designed to help victims overcome the effects of domestic violence;
- c. Leading fund-raising efforts to provide needed resources to victim's organizations;
- d. Sharing ideas and solutions with other community level initiatives on a global basis;
- e. Coordinating volunteer activities across multiple organizations in a focused and united way to support the global war on domestic violence; and,
- f. Serving as an example at the local, regional, national, and global level of an organization dedicated to winning this campaign.

Initiative Activities:

Change happens one person at a time, and the Initiative Activities, while global in reach and scope, will be carried out with a focus on what is needed to help individual communities support and protect victims of domestic violence.

The theme of the Initiative Activities is simple: "You Know It, You Own It." This means that ignoring domestic violence will no longer be tolerated or condoned at any level. Anyone in any organization who is aware of domestic violence must be part of the solution to ending domestic violence. No longer will bystanders or people in positions of authority be allowed to "wink and nod," acknowledging the problem and doing nothing to combat it. Everyone will be held to a zero-tolerance policy where actions will speak the loudest.

The Initiative Activities for Operation Michelle can best be described as "ever widening circles of influence and involvement." This means that the Initiative Activities start at the individual level and expand outward, eventually encircling more individuals, more organizations, and more branches of government.

Summary of Initiative Activities:

1. Administrative Structure – Establish Initiative Organization to provide leadership and coordination for all activities related to this initiative.
2. Local Communities – Achieving Strategic Objectives One Person at a Time:
 - a. Contacting local shelters and organizations for victims of domestic violence to identify their needs and challenges;
 - b. Coordinating fund raising and volunteer activities to solve these needs and challenges (e.g. selling personalized bricks to be placed in a "path of non violence" in parks, public places, or near shelters to raise permanent awareness of the fight to end domestic violence);
 - c. "Adopting" victims of domestic violence and working with them in a volunteer capacity to educate, train, support, and celebrate their efforts to break the cycle and return to a normal life; and,
 - d. Founding, sponsoring, supporting, and/or coordinating charitable events and organizations that work to support victims of domestic violence and raise public

awareness of the needs of the victims – giving a voice to those whose cries for help have not been heard.

3. Regional Activities – Coordinating Attacks on Multiple Fronts:
 - a. Sponsor events to bring individual, public, civic, and government groups together in common cause to define solutions and implementation plans to make improvements in victim’s rights and services;
 - b. Coordinate educational activities across multiple organizations and communities to begin creating a unity of purpose leading to greater cooperation and integration of initiatives across diverse groups (e.g. leveraging the PLTI – Parent Leaders Training Institute – to develop and implement grass-roots programs to begin addressing the issues);
 - c. Work with judges to influence a zero-tolerance policy when dealing with offenders, and to improve victims rights in a way that helps to prevent repeat offences;
 - d. Work with law enforcement agencies to give them the training and tools they need to effectively combat domestic violence in their jurisdictions;
 - e. Work with legislators to make eliminating domestic violence an imperative of each legislative session; and,
 - f. Work with the media to ensure that this issue is kept in the forefront of public opinion.
4. National Activities – One Unified Campaign:
 - a. Sponsor research on the issues of domestic violence and potential workable solutions that either could work or have worked in other places;
 - b. Establish charitable foundations to aid victims of domestic violence (education, housing, employment, etc.) and support local agencies working to help victims break the cycle of abuse;
 - c. Coordinate the activities of each local and regional campaign into a national force to drive public policy changes supporting the rights of victims and institutionalizing a zero-tolerance policy for offenders;
 - d. Work with national military branches to begin reducing the domestic violence caused by military personnel;
 - e. Coordinate the activities of former victims to “pay it forward” (give to other victims what they received that helped them overcome the cycles of abuse); and,
 - f. Interacting with all branches of national governments charged with providing services needed by victims of domestic violence.
 - g. Serving as a central “clearing house” of ideas, tools, techniques and resources that can be leveraged across the globe;
 - h. Serving as the “voice of reason” to bring disparate factions and viewpoints together to look for common ground and to never lose site of the unifying goal of eliminating domestic violence; and,
 - i. Leading by example for all nations to see in the fight to eliminate domestic violence in all its forms.

Initiative Patron:

The Patron of this initiative is Prince Leonard I, Sovereign of the Principality of Hutt River.

Initiative Organizers:

The organizers of this initiative provide much personal expertise in this area.

Sir Edward Rupert - Chairman. Sir Edward has served as a member of local law enforcement, and his wife works with domestic violence victims. Sir Edward and his wife serve on the Board of Directors of a domestic violence shelter, and are currently raising money for a new shelter in honour of Michelle Young. He and his wife are experts in the field related to helping victims.

Sir William B. Speir, Jr. – Vice Chairman. Sir William’s wife and children are survivors of domestic violence from her first marriage, and their participation represents the perspective of victims and their needs.

Initiative Logo:

The emblem of Operation Michelle has two key parts: the Lion battling the Snake, symbolic of the global struggle against domestic violence, and the Burning Torch, symbolic of the need to educate the world about this problem and serving as a beacon for others to join the cause.

