**Report no.6: Women Encounter with Focus on Women`s Rights**

**Women’s Event to Mark UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2023**

**Arranged by the Women’s Committee of the Cross-cultural Ministry of Kolding Deanery in cooperation with the office of Migrant Cooperation and Church Encounter with Other Religions of Haderslev Stift**

**Time: February 25 at 1-6 pm in Simon Peters Hus at Islandsvej 4, 6000 Kolding**

**Description:** This is the second activity to mark the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week. The first women’s event was on January 28 and was an introduction. This time is to focus on the rights of women.

**Preparations:** There were women from Iran and Afghanistan whom we invited to to tell about women situation in their own country. We have been hearing recent violated rights of women in these countries in social media. It was important for us to hear personally from people who have contact of their homeland even if they live in Denmark. However, influenza visited many homes and these two invited women could not join. The women who answered to the invitation were the following:

1. **Lilly Biswas** who presented the situation of women in India as she had lived in India together with her husband, who is from India.

Lilly shared that India, as a growing and developing country, has done great steps to improve the women situation, but the following are sad situations that still exist.

* The dowry system that requires a woman to pay an amount to the bridegroom’s family
* The early child’s marriage, which is still present in local villages.
* The strong patriarchy with more boys in schools and fewer girls taking education. It is true, that India has a good education system, and more women are educated, but there is still the stigma that education is not often availed or received by those in the lowest caste system, especially women.
* The gang rape we often hear as breaking news on TV often tells the low regard on women by certain men. But it is amazing to witness organizations and women organizing themselves to denounce these criminal acts of raping women.
* The organizations that protest against these criminal actions also show the consciousness of the Indian communities to protect the rights of women.

1. **Julia Prykhodko** made a presentation on Women in her own country, Ukraine. She came well prepared with a power point presentation on women, back to the role of women in power in history and how women began to feel being victimized. She had a good response from women in Ukraine who were present. Her presentation is enclosed.
2. **Neema Tanzania** presented the situation of women in Tanzania. The women in Tanzania, according to her, have the right to vote, and the political system allows women to be elected in the parliament. Women have the right to privacy and own properties or run their own business. Women have the right to be married. She is still wondering if the debate of the age for marriage eligibility is being corrected. She knows that boys are allowed to get married at the age of 18 and women are allowed to get married at the age of 15. She thinks it is not fair for the young girls. There is divorce in Tanzania and in case of divorce, the child goes with the mother until the child turns 8 years old. The father is obliged to financially support the child. Neema affirms that the Tanzanian women have the freedom to fulfill their dreams and they too, have freedom to worship.
3. **Jolanta Szymanska** gave a short presentation on women in Lithuania who in her own experience, it is the women who have more power than men. This led women participants to giggle in the way Jolanta affirmed that women are more powerful than men, as she has experienced from her homeland. She also tried to compare women in her country as women in Denmark, enjoying greater amount of freedom. That both women from her country and here in Denmark have been gifted with the freedom to decide for themselves, and they exercise responsibility for others in need.

**Women raised their questions and comments**, asking for clarification to the speakers. Then there was time for small group discussion where everyone was free to share about women situation in their homeland and share from their heart. How we can help women in the context where we are. There were women from Iraq, Syria, Italy, Sweden, Lithuania, Liberia, Philippines, Denmark, Ukraine, Poland, Tanzania.

On the table were laid a paper on some articles of **Human Rights from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by member nations of the United Nations in 1948.** The women spent also time toread and speak about them which relate to their present situation.

**Shared initiatives by some women:**

* Answering to request for monetary help as arranged by credible organization or reliable friends.
* Helping each other in taking care of children when special needs arise like, for example, when the mother is sick. There may be need help to pick up the child or children from school.
* Inviting some women to coffee and tea to talk as friends in a private home.
* Joining in women painting activity to be with other women, again to have contact especially when one gets lonely.
* Be keen to invitations on walking together to the forest or in nature, a break from busy life and to have a healthy exercise with fresh air and encounter with other women.
* Continue the tradition in Women Encounter Events, that women with small children will be continually allowed to participate in peace and that the program provides a program for children that offers them creative activity.
* Joining in efforts to protect and uphold women by joining activities that mark Women’s International Day or International Women’s Prayer Day.
* Be attentive to situations when women’s rights are violated against and speak out.

**Concluding part of the program:** Singing together and raising their hands to show solidarity with one another. Children were taken cared of by two of our women, Jårliny and Angel. The women declared that they were glad about the program, giving them time to talk closer with each other.

**Enclosures:**

1. The Women Encounter Program 2023
2. The presentation of Julia Prykdhodko
3. Photos of the event
4. The summarized program for FN World Interfaith Harmony Week