Adventists stage anti-abuse campaigns throughout South America

Coordinated program is biggest implementation of world church initiative

‘Go Into Harvest Field,’ Wilson tells North Asia Adventists

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Adventists stage anti-abuse campaigns throughout South America

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Brasília, Brazil
ANN staff

Thousands of Seventh-day Adventists took to the streets as activists against abuse in scores of cities throughout South America last Saturday.
The church’s campaign “Breaking the Silence” brought marches and motorcades along avenues, hosted dramatic performances in plazas, and partnered with school districts and public safety agencies to offer educational talks about preventing domestic violence, sexual abuse and cyber bullying.

The initiative was part of the Adventist world church’s Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day, which is typically held the fourth Saturday of every August. The campaign was established by the denomination’s Executive Committee in 2001.

World church leaders launched the initiative noting that occurrences of domestic violence and sexual abuse happen in Christian homes at rates similar to the general population. The first steps to fight abuse, they said, are awareness and education.

The campaign has been implemented by the Adventist Church with varying degrees of success, depending on the world region or congregation.

In 2009, Adventist News Network reported that many leaders and local congregations still hadn’t heard of the initiative, while in other regions, top church officials directed each congregation in their administrative territory to hold abuse-prevention campaigns.

“Many world regions have taken the initiative and turned it into one of their most effective days of community outreach,” said Raquel Arrais, associate Women’s Ministries director for the world church.

In recent years, the Adventist Church has also developed similar initiatives. In 2009, the church launched in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency the “EndItNow” campaign to combat violence against women. Also, Adventist Risk Management last year unveiled the “The Seven Campaign” to help bring awareness and reduce child abuse.

The denomination’s South American Division is one region that has continued to highlight Abuse...
Prevention Emphasis Day since its 2001 launch, often in a coordinated and large-scale way. Local campaigns are often dramatic and gain the attention of top news agencies.

Local “Breaking the Silence” campaigns this year were reported in more than a dozen cities by media outlets such as Agence France-Presse, Globo TV, and Uruguay’s largest circulation newspaper, El País.

In Montevideo, Uruguay, a TV news station reported live as 500 Adventists stood at traffic intersections with tape over their mouths to represent those who suffer abuse and are afraid to speak up.

South American Division President Erton Köhler said he felt it was important for the Adventist Church to continue talking about the subject even beyond the once-a-year day of emphasis.

“One event per year will not produce many results, but more will happen through a process of ongoing projects, publications and other means of publicity about how terrible abuse is and how it can be avoided,” Köhler said.

Indeed, in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, several “Breaking the Silence” marches were held in April and May.

“The participation of the members is strategic because problems happen not only in families outside the church, but in the church, too,” Köhler said.

This year’s campaigns partnered with top officials in several municipal and federal governments.

Peru’s Minister of Women’s Affairs, Ana Jara Velasquez, joined Adventist Women’s Ministries leaders last week at a campaign.

In Brazil’s state of Goiás, Secretary of Public Safety Renata Cheim said at a campaign, “The violence worries all of us, and as the representative of the Goiás government I am very pleased to know that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a project to prevent violence, which together with the government initiatives helps to discourage the violence.”

In Piraquara, Paraná, Brazil, lectures were held at two schools, drawing approximately 2,500 students.
"We have noticed here in Piraquara many cases of sexual abuse," said Joslaine Beninca, a teacher at Dr. Gilberto Alves do Nascimento State College. “The lectures helped to identify some cases because we see some reactions of students who need help.”

Adventists distributed thousands of fliers on abuse awareness around plazas, squares and shopping centers. In the city of Aparecida de Goiania, Adventists used live musicians and free, seated massages to draw shoppers to their display, resources and licensed psychologists. After receiving a seated massage, nearby shop owner, Marilda Oliverira, said, “I was being informed what to do if you suffer violence or abuse, and even how to counsel someone who is in this situation.

“I’ve never seen a project like this,” she said.

—with reporting by Fernanda Beatriz, Veronica Korsun, Leonardo Leite, Tatiane Lopes, Bianca Lorini, Francis Matos, Oscar Nuñez, Ansel Oliver, Luzia Paula, Liane Prestes and Márcio Tonetti

'Go Into Harvest Field,' Wilson tells North Asia Adventists

Sep 02, 2013
Jeju Province, South Korea
Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review

Seventh-day Adventists attending morning worship at the 2013 Northern Asia-Pacific Division International Mission Conference were challenged to “go forward into the harvest field” and tell the world about Jesus and His soon coming.

Pastor Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, issued the appeal in an August 31 sermon heard by over 4,000 gathered at the Jeju International Conference Center on this island off the southern coast of South Korea.

Recalling the morning’s varied activities: the Sabbath school lesson, choral music, a sand “painting” done on a lightbox in front of the congregation, young children’s spirited performance that “told us about Abraham’s faith,” and a “wonderful testimony from China about the faithfulness of the people of the division,” Wilson praised the efforts he called but a prelude for the congregation.
“All of this is pointing to God’s call to you and to me, people who accept God’s commandments and the faith of Jesus, to go forward into the harvest field, all through the power of the Holy Spirit,” Wilson said.

In an impassioned message, Wilson discussed the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 and their link to today’s world. He implored his hearers to lovingly and cheerfully share these messages with others to help “call out” those attentive to God’s word at the end of time.

He tied the First Angel’s message, a summons to worship the Creator of the Universe, to the keeping of the Bible Sabbath: “The call to worship God as the Creator automatically places upon people the responsibility to observe the day that honors His creative act,” Wilson said. “A created being cannot honor his Creator while defying the command to keep Saturday, the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, holy, which God Himself set aside as a memorial of His creation. During the time of trouble that immediately precedes Jesus’ return, the seventh-day Sabbath will be the central issue of conflict in the great controversy.”

Wilson added that this first message is also tied to the issue of origins: “But there is more to recognizing and worshiping God as the Creator. To worship God as the Creator means there must be a willingness to reject false theories about the origin of life, such as evolution,” he said. “It is impossible to believe in evolution and say that God is Creator of heaven and earth and all the life they contain. The two concepts do not mix. In essence, evolution is not a science; it is a false form of religion.”

The Adventist leader noted that the Second Angel’s message is a plea to abandon a dead, false and fallen religious system: “God’s people who are still in Babylon are called out so they will not be guilty of participating in her sins and will not receive the plagues that are to be poured out upon her,” Wilson said. “Therefore, Babylon is constituted by churches that teach many of the theological errors passed down through the church of the middle ages.”

Noting that those who reject the Sabbath will be angered by the support of Adventists and others for the biblical day of rest, part of the Third Angel’s message, Wilson said a time of testing will follow.
“We are so grateful for the religious freedom that is available in many countries around the world. Thank God for it; we need to use our religious liberty to defend religious liberty,” he told the congregation. “However, according to Bible prophecy, the time is coming when religious freedom will be reduced and churches will so control the government that the government will pass laws that will fulfill the wishes of the apostate churches. Anyone who disagrees with what this church/state relationship stands for will be persecuted. Don’t be afraid of that day. Lean on Jesus today and you will lean on Him in the future.”

The four-day event opened Wednesday evening, August 28. The opening ceremony began against a backdrop of 600 LCD video screens merged to form a giant display, a virtual “choir” comprised of videos of individual Adventists in the region singing “My Lord is Coming Soon” blended to offer a hymn of commitment in a division with both tremendous enthusiasm on the part of its people, but also incredible challenges in reaching others.

In a region encompassing “one quarter of the world’s population, we have a responsibility to spread the gospel,” a slide read. Slides, in English, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese, then noted the countries under the division’s aegis, reflecting that “the tears of North Koreans, God remembers,” as that country’s images were shown.

For China, that nation’s prosperity was noted, along with the comment that Christians have a “heavier” burden of “carrying the cross” in a nation of booming economic prosperity. Chinese Adventist believers performed a song, which included a performance on a traditional flute, as their cultural contribution.

Japan, whose Adventists enthusiastically participated in the opening ceremonies, was dubbed “the land of the god of money—Mammon,” where “secular men have closed their hearts.” Notwithstanding, leaders from the Japan Union Mission wore T-shirts emblazoned with “Jesus@Tokyo” as emblematic of their effort to reach one of the world’s largest cities.

Participants from Taiwan and Mongolia were heartily welcomed, particularly by the hundreds of Adventist believers from China who were seated just before the convention center’s main stage. The presentation noted the “wilderness” nature of much of Mongolia; while in Taiwan the need for growing “the root of faith and Christian culture” was emphasized.

The appearance of Taiwan brought together two presidents of the mission field on the: Steven Wu, current mission field president, and Robert S. Folkenberg, Jr., former president, who now leads the China Union Mission from offices in Hong Kong. Later, leaders of each administrative region, along with division president Jaiyrong Lee, reaffirmed the commitment in their regions to spreading the good news.

In turn, Kisung Bang, Jeju Island’s provincial governor, gave an impassioned word of welcome, speaking for five minutes in recognition of Seventh-day Adventists and greeting those who traveled to this spot off the southern tip of the Republic of Korea.

In Japan, 10th APACT Conference fights Asia’s tobacco epidemic
Public health advocates in the Asia-Pacific region want tobacco excluded from the products covered by a proposed regional free trade agreement.

The Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement would otherwise undermine international efforts to curb cigarette companies’ advertising, the Asia Pacific Association for the Control of Tobacco (APACT) said in a statement August 20.

The call came during the 10th APACT Conference, which drew more than 700 delegates from 40 countries to Tokyo last week, among them Seventh-day Adventists. The trade partnership, delegates said, would give tobacco companies more traction to sue countries over advertising bans or other public health measures designed to restrict the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Several major tobacco companies recently sued the Thai government for increasing the size of graphic health warnings on cigarette packs from 55 percent to 85 percent.

“APACT was organized to protect Asia from the tobacco industry,” said Kyoichi Miyazaki, secretary-general of the non-governmental organization and Adventist Church member. “We are dedicated to continuing that legacy and ending the tobacco epidemic in Asia.”

Indeed, APACT was established in 1989 to fight trade sanctions designed to promote the free sale of tobacco products in Korea, Japan, Thailand and Taiwan.

Since then, the organization has worked to stem the flow of tobacco to developing countries in Asia by implementing aggressive tobacco control programs, including bans on cigarette smoking, restriction of smoking in public places and comprehensive educational and intervention programs, Miyazaki said.

APACT founder Dr. David Yen was a major advocate for emerging tobacco control in the region and lobbied aggressively for anti-tobacco legislation, Miyazaki said during a keynote speech to honor the late leader.
Dr. Yen frequently enlisted actors and other celebrities to raise awareness of the dangers of smoking, among them Jackie Chan, who starred in an anti-tobacco initiative called “Strike Back Against Tobacco” in 2001.

Still, Asia remains a challenging region for tobacco control, Miyazaki and other advocates said. As developed counties toughen their restrictions on smoking, tobacco companies increasingly focus on developing countries, where they face less resistance. Trade agreements that classify tobacco as a legal commodity make it difficult for small countries to fight these efforts.

“The [Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement] does not recognize tobacco as a uniquely harmful product or provide safe harbor for nations to regulate in order to reduce tobacco use,” a statement released last week by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids said. “The tobacco industry and its allies in government increasingly use trade and investment agreements to challenge legitimate tobacco control measures.”

Miyazaki agreed, noting that the current political party in Japan does not favor tobacco control. But despite the challenges, he said advocates “can have a great impact on the Japanese government by showing how many Asian countries have been negatively affected by the tobacco industry in Japan.”

The Adventist Church was an early leader fighting tobacco. As far back as 1848, church co-founder Ellen White wrote about the health risks associated with smoking. In Asia, the church continues to host smoking-cessation programs and stop smoking clinics. Miyazaki, who previously served as Health Ministries director for the Adventist Church in Japan, was active in launching some of these efforts.

Dr. Peter Landless, Health Ministries director for the Seventh-day Adventist world church, attended the APACT conference and applauded Miyazaki’s decades of temperance and anti-tobacco work in the region.

“This event and the leading role of a Seventh-day Adventist in anti-tobacco work in this very challenging region is big news, Landless said. “We are often chided that our church and its members have lost the vision in opposing tobacco; here is news to the contrary.”

Tanzanian government grants charter to Adventist university

Aug 28, 2013
Arusha, Tanzania
Lusekelo E. Mwakalindile

Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete granted a charter to the University of Arusha, giving the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the country an institution of higher learning with the highest academic accreditation.
The ceremony took place at the State House in Dar es Salaam on August 20. Kikwete handed the certificate of approval to Chancellor Godwin Lekundayo, who also serves as president of the Adventist Church in Tanzania.

“We thank God for this development and pray that the university will continue to uplift the name of God and the Adventist Church,” said Andrew M. Mutero, Education director for the denomination’s East-Central Africa Division, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Representatives from seven other universities receiving a charter also participated in the ceremony.

Twenty of the country’s 50 universities are now formally licensed by the federal government.

Kikwete challenged the representatives of the institutions to increase the number of students who graduate with master’s and doctoral degrees, which could increase the number of students who might later return as university lecturers.

Kikwete advised the newly-established universities to also consider recruiting international teaching staff as a temporary strategy. He said this would reduce the practice of having one lecturer teaching in more than one university.

"University professors should have permanent areas so that they can concentrate and produce quality professionals who will compete in the global market," he said.

University of Arusha began in 1974 as Arusha Adventist Seminary, which offered ministerial courses and health courses. In 2003, then known as Tanzania Adventist College, the school was permitted to adopt the use a name "University of Arusha" and start the process of becoming a university. In 2007 it was offered a provisional license by the Tanzania Commission for Universities.

The University of Arusha, which today serves more than 2,700 students, is also accredited by the Adventist Accreditation Association.

Currently, the University of Arusha offers certificates, undergraduate degrees and master’s degrees.

Besides its main campus at Usa River, it operates the Arusha Extensional Centre in Arusha City and Buhare Extensional Centre in Musoma, in the northern part of the country.

There are more than 450,000 Adventist Church members in Tanzania.

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