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Inter-America: Church commits to reaching isolated people groups

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November 1, 2011 - Ocho Rios, St, Ann, Jamaica...Nigel Coke/IAD

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Enditnow is a global campaign to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence against women and girls around the world. It aims to mobilize Adventists around the world and invites other community groups to join in to resolve this worldwide issue.

"I am happy that we are here today and we are joining hands with all the other groups - the government and other faith-based members -- and we are saying we are tired of it," said Lorraine Vernal, women's and children's ministries director for the church in Jamaica. "You may say what can I do? You came out today, you are standing, you are listening, you may be watching via the internet. When you hear violence perpetrating next door, say something, you can do it anonymously. We need to end it now!"

The march by the banner-bearing group clad in purple tops and led by the Pathfinders marching band. It was part of a women's weekend retreat organized by the central region of the church and supported by the other regions of Jamaica.

"Prevention is always the best way," said Attorney-at-Law Lori-Anne Montaque, who did a short presentation on Legal Issues and Abuse. "There are enough laws now on our books to protect women and children against abuse; however, I have seen far too many of them [children and women] come to court on matters of sexual abuse and it sometimes takes months of counseling before they can speak to the issues for which they are brought to court."

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Vernal explained that every child needs to be protected by the Child Care and Welfare Act and the duty is on each adult to protect every child. "You don't have to be his or her mother or father, the point is that we must protect our children, because in protecting our children we are protecting our future."

"There is need for a re-socialization of people," Montaque added. "Abuse occurs when people have differences and various influences and frustration with life. I hope that through this launch and the awareness that it has brought, we will see some positive changes."

With the government's plans to organize events on the fight against violence towards women and girls from Nov. 25 to Dec. 10, 2011, Heather-Dawn Small, women's ministries director for the Adventist World Church, in her address to the gathering at Buckfield Park, called on Church members to get involved.

"We need to get involved," said Small. "If there is a march we need put on our purple shirts and get out there with our hand-held signs. We need to get in the communities, get
Going against the grain can be difficult and painful; yet Seventh-day Adventist leaders in the Inter-American Division (IAD) recently vowed to do just that.

Nearly 100 IAD church leaders agreed to take on the monumental task of reaching the more than 100 populations in the territory who still have not heard the gospel in their own language. Leaders committed to the new aggressive focus during the territory-wide Adventist Mission Summit, held at the IAD headquarter office in Miami, Florida, Oct. 23-26, 2011.

The unreached populations or people groups in some 1,000 areas throughout the territory speak some 700 languages or dialects, a task that has leaders wide-eyed and hungry for the difficult challenge.

"No more running away from the difficult," said Pastor Israel Leito, president of the church in Inter-America as he spoke to Adventist Mission coordinators and church presidents as they began the summit. "We will look for the most difficult places in Inter-America and attack those places with the truth. We want to turn for the better in fulfilling the mission of the church," he added.

Fulfilling the mission of the church has been the driving force of laypeople and ministers who work tirelessly to preach the gospel in their communities throughout Inter-America, yet leaders said it is not enough to reach people groups such as the Hindus and Muslims in the Caribbean, the Mayans in Guatemala and parts of Mexico, the Aztecs in Mexico, the indigenous people in Venezuela, and even communities in the large cities.

"We have not been obedient to God's perspective and God is calling us back to obedience to His intentional view, His original plan was for the gospel to be preached to every tribe, every tongue and every nation," said Pastor Samuel Telemaque, Adventist Mission director for the church in Inter-America and organizer of the summit.

It's about being the voice for the unreached, added Telemaque. "Adventist Mission is seeking to give a voice to be an advocate for these people in terms of giving attention and sharing the gospel," he explained."It's the organization looking in terms of its resources, in terms of redirecting some of its financial