August 15, 2015

To: UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law & in Practice wgdiscriminationwomen@ohchr.org

From: *Women of the Jaguar Taíno Warrior Society (Guarixeno ‘Aroá Taíno Guaríbono)* - “Bohio Atabei Mujeres de la Yuka” Caribbean Indigenous Women’s Circle

Re: Submission for research on **Good practices in Elimination of Discrimination against women with regard to the Right to Health & Safety**

Takahi ituno (greetings, sisters):

Hahom (Thank you) for affording us the opportunity to provide you with some concerns regarding the Right to Health & Safety for all women in the globe.

It is our hope to bring to your attention, some situations that are impacting women and girls in the following areas:

* Gardasil/HPV vaccinations as it pertains to the health and safety of women and girls.
* Due to socio-economic factors, there are women who are in a **Developed Countries**, yet they live in communities that are under conditions similar to those one would find in **Developing Countries,** where Health & Safety is compromised.
* Taking a more pro-active approach to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

In addition, although the questionnaire is very important, and we understand that the answers are of the essence, for us women who live in a so-called Developed Country, our answers may become misleading in the sense that our country has a lot of measures in paper that could be perceived as a “they have it all covered”, when in fact the reality is another for women in vulnerable, low-income communities. Therefore, we chose to send you this communication in the hopes that our concerns be considered and hopefully, find and/or formulate solutions that will benefit all women and girls in the globe, whether they are in a developed country or in a developing country.

1. ***Gardasil / HPV Vaccinations as it pertains to the Health & Safety of women and girls***

More and more tangible evidence has been surfacing regarding the clear detrimental physiological and psychological effects on the people that are receiving this vaccine. Although initially offered to sexually active young women, this Human Papillomavirus Quadrivalent (HPV) vaccine is currently being offered to young girls and boys alike, (http://www.gardasil.com) regardless of whether or not they are sexually active. Children between the ages of 11 and 12 are now a target, and those who are 12 DO NOT require parental consent to get the vaccine. Some School Districts and States in the United States have gone as far as making this vaccine mandatory, not allowing those without it to attend school until they do so. (<http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/hpv-vaccine-state-legislation-and-statutes.aspx>)

The evidence compiled regarding some of the adverse effects of this vaccine has been astonishing. Among the more drastic effects have been paralysis and in some cases, death. The need for further research by uninterested and neutral parties should be paramount when considering the risk versus the benefits of such vaccination. There is an increasing number of class action lawsuits to the makers of these vaccines in several countries. Including one awarded for a total of $6 million dollars to 49 subjects.

Here is a sample of a few links with some of the claims regarding the HPV vaccine:

http://www.trueactivist.com/its-official-139-girls-have-died-from-hpv-vaccinations/

<http://sanevax.org/new-death-post-gardasil-updated-vaers-figures-report-that-hpv-vaccines-adverse-reactions-are-50-higher-than-other-age-related-recommended-vaccines/>

<http://healthimpactnews.com/2014/gardasil-vaccine-one-more-girl-dead/>

<http://therefusers.com/refusers-newsroom/us-vaccine-court-pays-6-million-to-gardasil-victims-most-claims-not-yet-settled/#.Vc_X0PlViko>

<http://classaction.org/gardasil> (comments from many people that have been affected by this vaccine)

The Education regarding the vaccine needs to entail all evidence for and against it. **It should be a choice**, **rather than mandatory** and if in fact the cases have been proven to have these negative correlations with the vaccine, it would be imperative to cease its distribution until further independent studies have been concluded and can assure the Health and Safety of those who are willing to receive it.

**Our lives should not be measured as that of another’s profits.**

1. ***Women who are in Developed Countries, yet they live in communities that are under conditions similar to those one would find in Developing Countries***

A great concern is that it is automatically assumed by many, that because someone is living in a so-called Developed Country, that most, if not all the needs that women may have to ensure their Health & Safety are being met and protected.

There are many women who live in vulnerable, low-income, most times, minority communities. Many of these communities are under conditions similar to those in Developing Countries even when they are in a so-called Developed Countries.

The socio-economic circumstances they experience, do not allow them to receive equal medical services, for example.

In some cities, they have to go to community clinics because they cannot afford a private doctor. These clinics tend to be in high-crime, drug infested areas, where you may have a woman compromising her safety by going into the community to obtain the needed services, or compromising her health, to ensure her safety, by choosing not go.

There are also cases in which a woman may be considered to earn “too much money” to qualify for free or low-cost medical services, yet cannot afford to pay the high deductibles or share-of-cost plans required to seek attention in other medical institutions or private doctors, hence remaining without much needed medical attention that could result detrimental to their health.

In Puerto Rico (Borikén), a territory of the United States, they have an HMO-like medical plan for low-income families, called “The Reform”. Most doctors are encouraged to minimize the number of referrals they give to Specialists. An “appointment” at the doctor’s, literally represents spending an entire day, lines of people outside the door, hoping to be seen. Lab tests are at a minimal, and people can wait months just to get a referral approval for a costly test, like an MRI or a referral to a specialist, (who are already scarce due to the economic conditions in the island where most of the professionals are continuously leaving the island for the mainland).

If one happens to be in a small town, the local hospital cannot handle all types of conditions and one has to go to another town to a bigger hospital, to go through the same process all over again. That represents, money that most do not have, and a huge burden , especially on the woman, who culturally is the one that takes care of the children, much more if she is the one who is ill.

The Psychological impact on a mother, whose child has a Developmental and/ or a Learning Disability is immense. The resources are just not there and even when the mother is proactive in trying to get the help, most times it is a helpless situation, creating an additional problem of a Psychological nature, because now the mother begins to suffer from Depression & Anxiety, while the child is still without the medical assistance he so much needs.

It is imperative that these conditions experienced by so many women on a daily basis, in the so-called Developed Countries be considered when making your official report.

***C.*** • ***Taking a more pro-active approach to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action***

 It is important that a recommendation be made so that an international, national and local campaign be made on what Perspective of Gender Education entails. It needs to be explained in a fashion that all can understand. Although the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a plan that was designed to bring about equality for women and girls, one of the things we are facing in the island of Puerto Rico (Borikén) is that some churches have began a campaign of misinformation with regards to what “Perspective of Gender” means. Rather than seeing it as something of equality, they are presenting it as a plan that promotes Homosexuality and/or that the children will be influenced adversely by it. Among their strategies is they are distributing a letter (See attached – it is in Spanish) so that the teachers find themselves in a bind and will have to limit themselves with anything that could potentially address Perspective of Gender. The cases of Domestic Violence in our island, as well as the cases of child abuse, which most go under-reported, continue to be a major issue and concern, and these practices, are designed to maintain women and girls marginalized in an oppressive, Machismo-filled and Religious-tight society. We are supposed to live in a place where there should be separation of Church and State, but the church has great influence in what happens at the insular level.

We thank you for your consideration, and again for all your efforts to ensure that Women and Girls reach a level of equality, while ensuring their Health & Safety at a Global scale.

Cordially,

Tai Pelli - Guaribo Tekina (Warrior Teacher) - Women of the Jaguar Warrior Society

Taipelli21@gmail.com

Guarixeno ’Aroá (Women of the Jaguar) – Alliea Kaiweikení Martínez, Amy Majagua’narú Ponce, Licy Rodríguez, Yari Sina Sierra, Joanne “Nani” Morales

Bibino (Grandmothers) Bohío Atabei Mujeres de la Yuka – Vanessa “Inarúnikía” Pastrano, Joanna “Aya” Soto-Avilés, Gina Robles-Villalba, Esperanza Martell