

HER DIGNITY NETWORK LAUNCH THE HERITAGE CENTER - WASHINGTON, DC

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There are moments in the life of the Center where a sense of God's orchestration amidst our plans is particularly evident. The launch of Her Dignity Network on International Women's Day, March 8, 2013, was one such moment. Throughout the morning we experienced unity in the message from the speakers: whatever little you can do to bring dignity to a person will have a ripple effect and change the world.

In choosing International Women's Day for the launch we desired to offer an alternative message to much of what is touted in relation to global women's health: a message that women are more than radically autonomous beings whose only health needs and concerns are related to her reproductive system and rights. Rather, women are part of their familial, local, and national communities and face health challenges and disparities across their lifespan. A woman's status as an equal bearer of the *imago Dei* is her source of dignity beyond the reach of any government or international organization.

With that in mind our executive director, Paige Cunningham, JD, addressed the questions: Why this network? Why one more voice in the milieu of global women's health? and, What makes this Network distinct? Her Dignity Network is a global network of women and men, united around the dignity of every woman and girl for her entire lifetime, from conception through death. A network mobilized to make a tangible difference through credible research, transformative education, and hands-on help, and motivated by the love of the one who made us all in his image and gave us dignity.

Jameela George, MBBS, MIRB, a doctor and executive director of the Centre for Bioethics, India, as well as a 2009 CBHD Global Bioethics Education Initiative scholar, discussed the landscape for global women's health for the Indian context and beyond. India presents most of the discrimination and health issues that women and girls face around the globe, and Dr. George has firsthand experience with many of these issues in her context and work. After her sobering report, she reminded

us that we are not without hope, as those of us who care and work in this area can bring hope and dignity to whatever we do.

At the launch, the Center also debuted the Network's online presence, www.herdignity.net. The website features upcoming activities and events, key resources based on credible data-driven research, issue based campaigns and special project opportunities. Our hope is that this website will be the hub for a global network of individuals and organizations committed to changing the lives of women and girls around the world.

A key value of Her Dignity Network and the website is connecting people who desire to get involved with projects and organizations that are already on the ground working to uphold women's dignity. At the March launch, we featured three such organizations via a panel of experts: Debbie Dortzbach, MA, World Relief; Brenda Royden, Foundation for Social & Cultural Advancement; and Shannon Senefeld, PsyD, Catholic Relief Services. All presented the work their organizations are doing in the area of global women's health, all emphasized the importance of the dignity of every woman and girl, and how showing an individual dignity can transform a family, which can begin to transform a community, and then the world.

The launch of Her Dignity Network was the culmination of more than two years of strategic planning meetings, discussions, hard work, and a lot of networking. When this day finally arrived there was a palpable sense of celebration. It was Her Dignity Network's birthday...and we are just getting started.

Keep watch for the start of the first issue campaign for Her Dignity Network to begin this fall on the Her Dignity website: [herdignity.net](http://www.herdignity.net). All of the videos from the March launch event are now available on our YouTube channel (<http://youtube.com/bioethicscenter>).