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TECH GIANTS, ACTIVISTS, POLICY MAKERS, & NON-PROFITS COME TOGETHER TO DISCUSS HOW INNOVATION CAN HELP END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The first Open Square Summit examines how communications strategies and new technologies are working together to effect transformative and lasting change



Washington, D.C. (October 7, 2013)— **Futures Without Violence** held the first Open Square Summit Thursday, bringing together Google, Facebook, the World Bank and the McCain Institute for International Leadership, along with international thought leaders, policymakers, philanthropists, practitioners, and advocates to discuss successful communications strategies, technology platforms, policy priorities, and advocacy efforts that are offering innovative solutions for ending gender-based violence around the world.

“For more than 30 years, we’ve used communications to drive social change around violence against women in the U.S.,” remarked Esta Soler, President of Futures Without Violence. “We now see evidence that technologies such as mobile phones and social networks are empowering women around the world, but these tools are only as strong as the communities that use them.”

From social networks that galvanize women’s rights activists in India - to YouTube video testimonials of rape victims in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Summit showcased “tech tools that are changing the world.” Summit attendees answered polling questions from digital tablets contributed by Google, and learned about the role that big data is playing in efforts to track sex trafficking networks and expose violence against women and children globally.

“Our work is to think of ways to enable people who are caught in violence, instability or repression,” said Scott Carpenter, Deputy Director of Google Ideas. He outlined an international information-sharing collaboration between anti-human trafficking hotlines and nonprofits that Google has funded with a Global Impact Award.

“I’m enormously optimistic,” said Nancy H. Rubin, former U.S. Ambassador to the UN Commission on Human Rights. “The problem for women has been that the power of their voice has not been heard.”

That is changing now that there are mobile phone everywhere...and somehow now women know that they have the right to be heard.”

Making a surprise guest appearance – despite the U.S. government shutdown – Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) appealed to the room to help build a bi-partisan coalition to re-introduce and pass the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) this fall, noting that regardless of the shutdown, “these things don’t stop.”



Adele Kibasumba and Cindy McCain
on imagining a future for the DRC

Speakers shared personal and often heartbreaking accounts of their experiences working with, and in some cases living as, survivors of gender-based violence. Cindy Hensley McCain, who has traveled to the Democratic Republic of Congo multiple times over the past three years, joined a lunchtime conversation with young Congolese activist Adele Kibasumba that was led by CNN’s Jessica Yellin.

“Personal experience means so much in this work,” said Mrs. McCain after hearing Ms. Kibasumba’s emotional description of the prevalence of sexual violence in Congo. “It’s hard to get people to talk about rape.” When asked what she does when people try to avoid the subject, McCain responded, “I keep hammering at them.”

Most gender-based violence stems from a belief system that tolerates it. Increasingly, leaders around the world are recognizing that ending such violence is not only a human rights imperative, but also a critical factor for building security, stability, and prosperity. That initial recognition is changing the landscape around this issue, as governments are becoming partners in addressing this issue within their own societies.

Maura O’Neill, former Chief Innovation Officer at USAID, led a panel that examined the case for investing in women and girls. “Violence against women has a direct impact on GDP,” said Julie T. Katzman, Executive Vice President of the Inter-American Developmental Bank, referencing recent research that indicates gender-based violence inhibits economic growth, particularly in developing nations.

Ending gender-based violence is possible, but it demands a concerted approach that runs across sectors and party lines to bring about transformational change around the world.

Made possible by the Open Square Charitable Gift Fund, the Summit was also supported by the following partners: The World Bank, The Inter-American Development Bank, The Organization of American States’ Inter-American Commission of Women, The McCain Institute for International Leadership, The Global Women’s Institute and The Institute for Public Diplomacy & Global Communications at The George Washington University

On October 3, #OpenSqSummit began trending in Washington, D.C. for several hours. Click [here](#) to see a snapshot of the activity the Summit generated on Twitter.

Conference Highlights

Below is a collection of video highlights, including powerful personal testimony of the devastation of gender-based violence.

Click on the photos to view the videos or watch the entire Summit [here](#).



**Dee Dee Myers: Keynote Address
Women in Power**
(0:51)



**Sean Southey
Tech Tools - Radio**
(0:34)



**Maura O'Neill:
Mobile Phones as a vehicle for reducing gender-based violence**
(01:34)



**Scott Carpenter
Simple technology creating powerful tools**
(0:34)



Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky
Passing I-VAWA
(1:16)



Cindy Hensley McCain
Congo through different eyes
(1:16)



Adele Kibasumba
Heartbreak in the DRC
(4:41)



Jensine Larsen
Unleashing the collective feminine intelligence of the planet
(1:08)



Chi Yvonne Leina
The war in our bedrooms
(0:26)



Chi Yvonne Leina
Breast ironing in Cameroon
(2:25)

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About Futures Without Violence For more than 30 years, [Futures Without Violence](#) has led the way and set the pace for innovative educational programs, public action campaigns, policy development, and leadership training designed to end violence against women, children, and families around the world. Instrumental in developing the landmark Violence Against Women Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1994, Futures Without Violence has established a Global Center for Leadership and Action that will engage today's diverse national and global leaders, stand with survivors, and continue working to break the silence around gender-based violence. Learn more about Futures Without Violence on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).