



Global Empowerment Campaign

As we have entered into an era of globalization, the number of Americans living in foreign countries is continuously growing. Unfortunately, the constitutional freedoms and rights of Americans do not always cross international borders, especially in terms of domestic violence. There is an immense gap in resources for and awareness of Americans living overseas who are experiencing domestic violence. According to the US State Department estimate in 2005, 6.6 million American civilians live in foreign countries. If these Americans were in one state, it would be the 13th largest state in the U.S. (between Virginia with 7.7 million and Washington with 6.5 million). Presuming the Overseas population of expatriates reflects the national statistics, it can be estimated that each year around 113,800 American women are abused by an intimate partner.

While there is vast amount of Americans overseas who lack domestic violence resources and services, the awareness and representation of this population is miniscule. A pioneer in the field, the Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center (AODVC) is the only organization whose sole purpose is to serve this underserved population. From its ten years of experience serving this population and advocating for women and children overseas, AODVC is knowledgeable on the specific obstacles and barriers that is endured by this population. Americans who experience domestic violence while living abroad face a magnitude of difficulties on top of the painful and horrific experiences that all domestic violence survivors undergo within their own countries.

Barriers faced by American survivors while living abroad include (but are not limited to):

- No access to travel documents
- No permission to leave country
- Abuser may be high ranking in the American Embassy, local government or corporation
- Does not speak the language
- Unfamiliarity with resources and legal system
- Domestic violence may not be illegal in country of residence
- Local services may not be accessible to non-citizens
- Undocumented legal status

Obstacles facing survivors after returning include (but are not limited to):

- May be homeless, penniless, and will probably not be able to recover any personal possessions or assets
- International child custody cases



- Locating and paying for an international family law attorney
- Reverse culture shock
- Lack of support network
- Does not qualify for services such as shelter or transitional housing
- Difficulty finding employment due to a gap in work history
- Credit history does not transfer from abroad
- Abuser might have contacts in U.S. looking for the survivor and children
- Difficulty enforcing U.S. alimony and child support orders in foreign countries.

The lack of awareness, combined with the shortage of resources, further victimizes Americans experiencing domestic violence abroad. To address this issue, the Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center has launched its “Global Campaign to Empower Americans Experiencing Domestic Violence Abroad.” This campaign aims to increase global awareness of American overseas domestic violence survivors, while also making the services of AODVC known and accessible to those who need it. The end result of the campaign is to empower this underserved population by amplifying their voices and providing them with the advocacy, resources, and tools to navigate the complicated jurisdictional, legal & social international landscapes, so that they may live their lives free of abuse either in the foreign country or back in the United States.

Campaign Action Plan

The Global Campaign to Empower Americans Experiencing Domestic Violence Abroad is a multifaceted project that begins with AODVC Volunteer Outreach Ambassador Trainings worldwide. These meetings will be held in six European cities in the autumn of 2009. Each will last approximately 6 hours, consisting of 2 parts: a general informational presentation in the morning, and a training session for prospective volunteer ambassadors in the afternoon.

Once trained, the responsibilities of Outreach Ambassadors are to educate and empower different organizations, corporations, universities, and women’s clubs in their country of residence to respond effectively and to understand the issues and barriers unique to Americans experiencing domestic violence in their countries. Each ambassador will be asked to commit to two year terms of voluntary service, giving presentations to groups hopefully consisting of ten or more people every three months.

Designed to create a snowball effect reaching thousands of people, this campaign will target 30 cities across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, South America, and Africa and train an estimated 10 ambassadors per city, resulting in 300 Ambassadors. The Volunteer Outreach Ambassador trainings will begin in 6 European cities during the fall of 2009. Pending continued funding, the outreach campaign will be completed by the end of winter, 2013.



Who it will reach:

With each of the 300 Ambassadors reaching approximately 80 people through their presentations, it can be estimated that **The Global Campaign to Empower Americans Experiencing Domestic Violence Abroad will directly reach, approximately, 24,000 people.** 24,000 people will then have the knowledge and the resources to help a client, friend, co-worker, relative, acquaintance, or themselves to access the specialized services offered free of charge by calling AODVC's international toll-free crisis line so that American women and their children can live free of abuse either in the foreign country or back in the US.