



“Orange the World: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!”

**United Nations Secretary-General’s Campaign
*UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women***

***16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Against Women & Girls
25 November - 10 December 2021***

Concept Note for engagement

1. BACKGROUND

The [16 Days of Activism against violence against women and girls](#) is an international campaign that takes place each year. It commences on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, until 10 December, Human Rights Day. It was originated by activists at the first [Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991](#) and this year marks its 30th anniversary. Over 6000 organizations in approximately 187 countries have participated in the Campaign since 1991, with a reach of 300 million¹ people. It continues to be coordinated each year by the [Center for Women’s Global Leadership \(CWGL\)](#) and is used as an organizing strategy by individuals, institutions and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

In support of this civil society initiative, under the leadership of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General’s [UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign](#) (UNiTE Campaign), launched in 2008, is a multi-year effort aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls (VAWG) around the world calling for global action to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy and create opportunities for discussion about challenges and solutions. As in previous years, the colour orange will be used to represent a brighter future, free from violence against women and girls, as a unifying theme running through all the global activities of the UNiTE Campaign.

¹ [Center for Women’s Global Leadership \(CWGL\)](#)

2. 2021 CONTEXT

According to the latest estimates, nearly 1 in 3 women aged 15 years and older, around the world have been subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner or both, at least once in their lifetime, indicating that levels of VAWG have remained largely unchanged over the last decade.² These numbers do not reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and would be even higher if they included the full continuum of violence that affect women and girls including sexual harassment, violence in digital contexts, harmful practices and sexual exploitation.

COVID-19 has exacerbated all the risk factors for VAWG, including unemployment and poverty, and reinforced many of the root causes such as gender stereotypes and harmful social norms. It has been estimated that 11 million girls may not return to school because of COVID-19, thereby increasing their risk of child marriage.³ The economic fallout is expected to push 47 million more women and girls into extreme poverty in 2021,⁴ reversing decades of progress and perpetuating structural inequalities that reinforce VAWG. Emerging data from a recent multi-country rapid gender assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on VAW by UN Women, using innovative remote data collection methods, confirm an increase of VAW as a result of COVID-19 in Cameroon, Kenya, Thailand and Ukraine. More data will soon be available for 9 more countries.⁵

In addition to the impact of COVID-19, the global context of violent conflicts and humanitarian crises, including climate-related disasters, are affecting more people than ever before, with a disproportionate impact on women and girls, perpetuating all forms of VAWG. As we have seen in the aftermath of the recent earthquake in Haiti, 53.6% of women have already encountered difficulties in accessing health services while the lack of housing and shelter is perceived by 83% as a factor of insecurity and increased risk of violence.⁶ The current complex situation in Afghanistan has led to a disregard for the hard-earned gains in women's rights.⁷ While the forms and contexts may differ across geographic locations, women and girls universally experience different forms of violence in public and private settings, in contexts of peace and in contexts of conflict as well as in humanitarian or crises settings. The most marginalized women, including women with disabilities, refugees or indigenous women amongst others, are at disproportionate risk and face greater barriers in accessing services and justice.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that the world was unprepared to respond to the rapid escalation of all forms of VAWG. If we want to ensure that no woman or girl is left behind, we need comprehensive and inclusive approaches that can be adapted to rapidly changing contexts, preventing and responding to all forms of VAWG.

² World Health Organization, on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data (VAW-IAWGED), Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018 (Geneva, 2021).

³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Keeping Girls in the Picture (2020); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage: Pandemic threatens achievement of the Transformative Results committed to by UNFPA (2020).

⁴ UN Women, From Insights to Action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19 (New York, 2020).

⁵ UN Women. Data Bites. Emerging Data on Violence against Women Confirm a Shadow Pandemic. 1 July 2021.

<https://data.unwomen.org/features/emerging-data-violence-against-women-confirm-shadow-pandemic>.

⁶ UN Women & CARE International (2021) Rapid Gender Analysis: Haiti 14 August 2021 Earthquake

<https://lac.unwomen.org/en/digiteca/publicaciones/2021/09/analisis-rapido-de-genero-terremoto-agosto-2021-haiti>.

⁷ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/9/statement-ed-patten-dismay-and-regret-at-absence-of-women-in-afghanistan-government>.

The **EU-UN Spotlight Initiative** represents a comprehensive, multistakeholder model driven by a commitment to leave no one behind which is making significant progress in preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls. In 2020 alone, 651,958 women and girls were provided with gender-based violence services despite COVID-19 related constraints and lockdowns, 879,138 men and boys were educated on positive masculinity, respectful relationships and non-violent conflict resolution and parenting, and there was a 22% increase in the number of convictions of perpetrators of violence compared to 2019, showing that it is possible to deliver high-quality results for women and girls even under the constraints of a pandemic.⁸

The **Generation Equality Forum (GEF)** and the **Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** are building a powerful global movement based on multilateralism and are mobilizing governments, CSOs, international organizations, philanthropies and the private sector to deliver transformational progress towards the elimination and prevention of GBV through four concrete actions: (1) Creating enabling policy, legal and resource environments; (2) Scaling up evidence-driven prevention programming; (3) Scaling up comprehensive, accessible and quality services for survivors; and (4) Enabling and empowering autonomous girl-led and women's rights organizations to exercise their expertise. In so doing 550 million more women and girls will live in countries with laws and policies prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls by 2026; efforts will increase by 50% the number of countries that include one or more evidence-based prevention strategy on gender-based violence in national policies by 2026; more women and girls will live in countries with multi-sectoral action plans on GBV which include provision of police, justice, health and social sector services by 2026; international funding will progressively improve and increase by 50% to women's rights organizations, activists and movements including those working to address gender-based violence against women and girls in all their diversity by 2026.

In this context, our efforts to prevent and eliminate VAWG need to continue with the same vigour during the 16 Days of Activism and throughout the year. Building on the momentum created during the [Generation Equality Forum](#) is crucial as the shadow pandemic has not ended and there is no vaccine against it.

3. UNITE CAMPAIGN'S THEME FOR 2021 AND ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES

This year's global campaign theme **"Orange the World: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!"** will mobilize all UNITE networks, civil society and women's rights organizations, the UN system, the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence, government partners, schools, universities, private sector, sports clubs and associations and individuals to:

- **Advocate for** inclusive, comprehensive and long-term strategies, programmes and resources to prevent and eliminate VAWG in public and private spaces prioritizing the most marginalized women and girls.
- **Amplify the success stories** demonstrating that VAWG is preventable by showcasing effective strategies and interventions to inspire all actors to scale up what works.
- **Promote the leadership of women and girls** in their diversity and their meaningful participation in policy making and decision making from global to local levels.

⁸ <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org>.

- Engage [Generation Equality Forum commitment makers](#) in your country or region to collaborate in the implementation of bold new commitments and to inspire further action to deliver progress on the [Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition Blueprint](#).

4. UN SYSTEM RESPONSE TO THE INTENSIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS DURING THE PANDEMIC

From the early months of the pandemic, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for a global ceasefire to end the shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls, appealing for peace in the home and an end to all violence everywhere. More than 140 countries expressed support and more than 149 countries have adopted around 832 measures as highlighted in the [Global COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker](#) (coordinated by UNDP with substantive technical leadership of UN Women). This is a heartening response to the [UN Secretary General's call to action](#) and the demands of women's movements around the world.

Through the UN Secretary-General's political engagement strategy on gender-based violence (GBV), the UN system further mobilized multiple stakeholders to address the immediate needs and long-term vulnerabilities of girls and women at risk of violence and recognize the key role women's rights organizations have played during the global crisis. To this end, the entire UN system has activated their platforms and networks to mobilize commitments and action to end gender-based violence (GBV) in the context of COVID-19. Details can be found in the **UNiTE Campaign's bimonthly Action Circulars** [here](#).

KEY ACTIVITIES: "ORANGE THE WORLD" AND "TAKE ACTION ON THIS ORANGE DAY AND DURING 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM"

In line with the 2021 global umbrella theme **Orange the World: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!**, the Official UN Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of VAW will be held on 23 November 2021 (TBC). Throughout the 16 day-long period from 25 November to 10 December, all UNiTE partners are encouraged to:

- Coordinate orange events and activities at global, regional, country and local levels to advocate for inclusive, comprehensive and long-term strategies, programmes and resources to prevent and respond to VAWG in all settings.
- Roll out an online digital crowdfunding campaign, [#Give25forUNTF25](#), under the theme "**Orange the World: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!**", every day during the 16 Days of Activism.⁹ UNiTE partners are invited to participate, inspire others to join this collective effort and disseminate assets and messages available at [UNTF@25 Trello board](#).
- Stimulate public conversations and educate the public on what individuals and organisations can do to raise awareness of VAWG during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Hold virtual seminars, radio programmes and explore creative and innovative approaches, such as through the medium of documentary films, exhibitions, digital and print media.
- Feature stories from survivors, activists and women's rights advocates to highlight their critical leadership role in ending VAWG from global to local levels.

⁹ Launched on 25th September, the UN Trust Fund's [#Give25forUNTF25 Challenge](#) calls on every single one of us to make a stand in making a world free from violence a reality for women and girls. To take action and lead the change to make a difference for women and girls around the world, visit UN Trust Fund's [#Give25forUNTF25 Challenge webpage](#) and donate [here](#).

- Enhance engagement of media and opinion makers with the objective of promoting and broadening awareness of the understanding of the benefits of inclusive programming and the need for sustainable financing for efforts to prevent violence against women and girls;
- Wear the colour **orange** and “orange” physical and virtual spaces on 25 November and throughout the 16 days of activism, including workplaces, significant monuments in cities and communities, online spaces such as the websites, e-signatures, social media accounts etc.

5. MAIN PRINCIPLES OF UNiTE CAMPAIGN ADVOCACY

- **Honour and acknowledge women’s movements** and their leadership in the 16 Days of Activism and in preventing and ending violence against women and girls in general.
- **‘Leave No One Behind’**: Sply a human rights-based approach and focus attention on the most underserved and disadvantaged groups of women and girls experiencing intersecting forms of harm in efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls.
- **Survivor-centred**: Take a respectful and ‘do no harm’ approach to the telling and/or retelling of survivor stories, only with their informed consent and under conditions in which they feel empowered to exercise their agency. This and the empowerment principles are vital for the engagement of survivor advocates/activists on their own terms. All UNiTE partners must ensure that survivor advocates’ rights, safety, dignity and confidentiality are prioritized and upheld.¹⁰ For more information, please refer to [Ensuring survivor-centered and empowering approaches](#).
- **Multi-sectoral**: Everyone in society has an important role to play in ending violence against women and girls and we all must work together across sectors to address the various aspects of violence against women and girls.
- **Transformative**: Fostering critical examination of gender roles, regimes and practices, while seeking to create or strengthen equitable gender norms and dynamics for fundamental, lasting changes for women and girls.
- **Elevate the voices of young feminists**: While the world has been reviewing progress made over the past 25 years since the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), it is time to create platforms to elevate voices of the next generation of feminists who are shaping their future now.

¹⁰ A [release form](#) is absolutely required for photos of children under the age of 18 and survivors of violence. A parent/legal guardian must give permission for the use of photos or videos of minors, with the exception of situations in which privacy does not apply (public demonstrations and marches or other public events where other press and photographers are taking photos and/or filming). Please refer to the [UN Women Photo Guidance](#) (also available externally [here](#)) for more information.