

UNWomen website offers food for thought:

Push forward: 10 ways to end violence against women

18 NOVEMBER 2022

Violence against women and girls remains the most pervasive human rights violation in the world, affecting more than 1 in 3 women—a figure that has remained largely unchanged over the last decade.

Global emergencies, crises and conflict have further intensified violence against women and girls and exacerbated the drivers and risk factors. Climate change is aggravating all types of gender-based violence against women and girls, an already visible pattern that will undoubtedly grow more extreme as the crisis worsens. Rapidly expanding digitalization is increasing online violence against women and girls, compounding existing forms of violence and leading to the emergence of new ones. At the same time, there has been a rise in anti-rights movements and anti-feminist groups, driving an expansion of regressive laws and policies, a backlash against women's rights organizations and a spike in attacks against women human rights defenders and activists.

In this context, ending violence against women might seem unimaginable, but it isn't. Large-scale reductions in violence against women can be achieved through feminist activism and advocacy coupled with coordinated action across justice, health, financial and other sectors. Recent evidence suggests that strong and autonomous feminist movements are the most critical factor in driving change.

Ending violence against women is everyone's business. This 16 Days, show your solidarity with feminist movements and advocates around the world. Whether you're a seasoned activist or just getting started, here are ten ways you can act now to end violence against women and girls:

Push forward: 10 ways to end violence against women

1. Speak up, speak out

Violence against women is pervasive, but it's not inevitable—unless we stay silent. In the face of rising anti-feminist movements, it's more crucial than ever that we speak up and out.

Taboos around gender-based violence provide perpetrators with impunity and prevent women and girls from getting the help they need: less than 40 per cent of women who experience violence seek help of any sort.

Let survivors and activists know you stand with them. Amplify their voices and stories. Create spaces for dialogue, both in person and online.

Not sure where to start? Share some of the activist stories from our editorial package, and check out our social media package for more shareable assets. Or use #OrangeTheWorld, #16Days and #PushForward to start your own conversation about gender-based violence.

2. Know the issue—and the signs

Violence against women takes many forms. It can be physical, sexual or emotional. It can be public or private, online or off, perpetrated by a stranger or an intimate partner. Regardless of how, where, or why it happens, it has serious short- and long-term consequences for women and girls and serves to prevent their full and equal participation in society.

Know what to look for by familiarizing yourself with the different kinds of violence: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence>

If you think someone in your life might be suffering from abuse, there are common signs you can look for. Learn more about what abuse looks like, and how you can help: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/signs-of-abuse>

3. Call out sexual harassment

For many women, sexual harassment is a daily experience. Whether it's online, on the street or in the workplace, brushing off inappropriate behavior serves to further normalize it.

Common forms of harassment like online bullying, catcalling, sexual comments and sexual jokes serve to make women and girls feel unwelcome and unsafe in public spaces. They help to reinforce biases and stereotypes that perpetuate misogyny. And they contribute to a culture of impunity, in which women can be harmed without consequence.

Create a safer environment for everyone online and offline by challenging your peers to reflect on their own behaviour and speaking up when someone crosses the line, or by enlisting the help of others if you don't feel safe.

For more on why it's important to report online harassment and violence against women, check out this interview with digital rights activist Marwa Azelmat: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2022/11/pushing-forward-preventing-violence-against-women-in-online-spaces>

4. Challenge beliefs on masculinity

Toxic masculinity drives violence against women.

Evidence shows that women in relationships with men whose beliefs and behaviours reinforce male dominance and gender inequality are more likely to experience intimate partner violence.

Traditional concepts of masculinity tend to emphasize traits like aggression, strength and control—while disparaging sensitivity, empathy, vulnerability and other traits traditionally associated with femininity.

When we fail to challenge these beliefs, everyone loses. Reflect on your own ideas about masculinity and femininity, and think critically about depictions of gender in media and culture. Support the men and boys in your life to embrace caretaking, emotional expression and other traditionally non-masculine traits.

5. Fund women's organizations

Investing in women's movements matters.

Evidence shows that a strong and autonomous feminist movement is the most crucial factor in driving policy change on gender-based violence. But women's rights organizations, key drivers of feminist mobilization, are increasingly being defunded, sidelined and silenced in decision-making spaces.

Increasing long-term funding to women's rights organizations is key to finding effective solutions to prevent and respond to violence against women.

Donate to local organizations that empower women, support survivors and promote actions and policies designed to reduce and prevent violence.

UN Women works with women's organizations around the world to end violence against women and secure equal rights for women and girls. Donate here: <https://donate.unwomen.org/en>.

6. Call for better responses and services

Services for women and girls experiencing violence can be the difference between life and death.

This means that shelters, hotlines, counseling and all support for survivors of gender-based violence need to be available for those in need, even during crises and emergencies.

Every year, the 16 Days of Activism campaign calls for united, global action to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

Join us in calling on governments to bridge funding gaps to address violence against women and girls, ensure essential services for survivors of violence are maintained during crisis and conflict, implement prevention measures, and invest in adapting and improving life-saving services for women and girls in diverse contexts.

Get more involved by volunteering at a local women's shelter, donating clothes or supplies, or training to become a crisis counsellor.

7. Demand more data

To effectively combat gender-based violence, we need to understand the issue.

Relevant data collection is key to implementing successful prevention measures and providing survivors with the right support. And yet the collection of sex-disaggregated and other crucial gender data remains a low priority for governments.

As gender-based violence has spiked due to COVID-19, climate change and other crises, the gaps in gender sensitive data collection have become more glaring than ever. Call on your government to invest in the collection of data on gender-based violence.

8. Push for stronger laws

We are still 21 years away from comprehensive laws banning violence against women to be in place globally.

The world needs stronger protection mechanisms to prevent and eliminate violence, harassment, threats, intimidation, and discrimination against women human rights defenders and women's rights advocates and activists.

Find out about the laws in your country: <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en>. Call on your government to strengthen legal frameworks, and help raise awareness about the gaps. Start or join a protest, support a legal advocacy group, and educate yourself on the stances of political candidates and representatives.

9. Support women's leadership

During COVID-19, women were vastly underrepresented on recovery task forces—a disparity reflected in the insufficiency of government responses to gender-specific issues like heightened domestic violence.

The same is true for climate action, peacebuilding, and a whole host of other issues: when women aren't at the table, their voices aren't being heard. That makes it all too easy for decision-making bodies to overlook crucial gaps in policies and financing.

Women's representation in decision-making spaces helps to ensure that the needs of women and girls are front and center—in crisis responses, humanitarian and peace agreements and policies of all kind. At the same time, women leaders face heightened risk of violence: across 5 regions, 82 per cent of women parliamentarians reported experiencing some form of psychological violence during their terms.

Call for women's increased representation in leadership, and for heightened protections for women in positions of power. Support women political candidates and women-led organizations and companies. Or take matters into your own hands—become the woman leader you want to see in the world.

10. Build solidarity with other movements

We're stronger when we work together.

Violence against women and girls is inherently connected to other forms of harm and injustice, including racism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, poverty, and climate change.

Strengthen the fight against gender-based violence by getting involved in other social and political movements, and getting activists from those movements involved in yours.

Together, we can resist the rollback on women's rights, amplify the demands of feminist movements across the world and push forward to end violence against women and girls once and for all.

From: <https://www.unwomen.org/en> 18/11/22