



UNiTE! ACTIVISM TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS!

**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 2022**

Concept Note for Engagement

1. BACKGROUND

The [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence against women and girls](#) is an international civil society led campaign that takes place each year. It commences on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on 10 December, Human Rights Day, indicating that violence against women is the most pervasive breach of human rights worldwide. It was originated by activists at the inaugural [Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991](#) and continues to be coordinated each year by the [Center for Women's Global Leadership \(CWGL\)](#). It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

In support of this civil society initiative, under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General's [UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women initiative](#) (UNiTE), calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanise advocacy efforts and share knowledge and innovations to end VAWG once and for all. Launched in 2008, UNiTE is a multi-year advocacy effort aimed at preventing and eliminating VAWG around the world. UNiTE calls on governments, development actors, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire UN system to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.

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 global actions of the UNiTE campaign.

2. UNiTE CAMPAIGN'S THEME FOR 2022 – UNiTE! ACTIVISM TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS!

Five years ago, the #MeToo movement, founded by activist Tarana Burke in 2006, exploded and sparked global mobilization creating a moment of urgency in preventing and responding to VAWG. Since then, unprecedented awareness and momentum have been created thanks to the relentless work of grassroots activists, women's human rights defenders and survivor advocates worldwide to prevent and eliminate VAWG. Other movements around the world such as #NiUnaMenos, #BalanceTonPorc, #TimesUp amongst others have also catalyzed change. Thanks to women's rights activism and advocacy ending VAWG is higher on the political agenda than ever before with progress in strengthening laws and policies, essential services and prevention strategies.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified all forms of VAWG, it has also created even more urgency which UN Women, women's rights organizations and others have capitalized to spur and secure policy changes which are expected to have long-term, trajectory altering impacts on reducing violence.¹ The UN Secretary-General has galvanized the UN system, Member States and other actors to put an end to VAWG once and for all through the [COVID-19 Political Engagement Strategy](#) and his call to Member States to develop emergency response plans to eradicate violence against women and girls through "[Our Common Agenda.](#)" The [Generation Equality Forum](#) (GEF) Action Coalitions have set out a clear pathway to achieve concrete change for women and girls worldwide and have mobilized [1149 commitments by 453 commitment makers to the Action Coalition on GBV.](#)

Yet, notwithstanding these growing efforts and achievements, VAWG remains the most widespread and pervasive human rights violation worldwide affecting more than an estimated 1 in 3 women,² a figure that has remained largely unchanged over the last decade.³ The most recent global estimates showed that, on average, a woman or girl is killed by someone in her own family every 11 minutes.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified VAWG and has also exposed and exacerbated deep structural inequalities, reversing decades of progress on women's labour force participation, raised the number of women living in extreme poverty and increased the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, all of which exacerbates the risk factors and drivers of VAWG.

¹ Mintrom, M. and J. True. 2022. "COVID-19 as a policy window: policy entrepreneurs responding to violence against women." *Policy and Society* X(X), pp. 1-12.

² Across their lifetime, 1 in 3 women, around 736 million, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner or both (Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates), however, this figure would be even higher if it included the full continuum of violence that affects women and girls including sexual harassment, violence in digital contexts, harmful practices and sexual exploitation.

³WHO (2021) Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates

⁴ UNODC (2021) Killings of women and girls by their intimate partner or other family members. Global estimates 2020

At the same time, there has been a rise in anti-rights movements including anti-feminist groups resulting in shrinking space for civil society, a backlash against women's rights organizations and a rise in attacks against women human rights defenders and activists. In many countries, we have already seen a pushback on women's rights, including withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention,⁵ regressive laws exacerbating impunity for perpetrators of domestic violence, and the use of force by governments to silence femicide and VAWG protestors in many countries.⁶ In some contexts, women's rights organizations have lost their legal status.⁷ According to the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, women defenders have been facing increased repression, violence and impunity, despite formal state commitments to respect, protect and fulfil their legal human rights obligations without discrimination.⁸ Data from Front Line Defenders demonstrates that the killings of women human rights defenders is on the rise⁹ and women defenders are routinely targeted with harassment, hate speech, discrimination, dissemination of personal or intimate information, defamation and other forms of online violence to silence and punish their public participation in social media.

SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN...

- **45%** of women reported that they or a woman they know has experienced a form of VAWG.
- **7 in 10** women said they think that verbal or physical abuse by a partner has become more common.
- **6 in 10** felt that sexual harassment in public spaces has worsened.

UN Women (2021). [Measuring the shadow pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19](#)

Despite these worrying trends, there is also more evidence than ever before that VAWG is preventable. Evidence demonstrates that the presence of a strong and autonomous feminist movement is the single most critical factor to drive policy change in ending violence against women and girls both in transnational contexts and in domestic policy making,¹⁰ signaling the importance of investing in women's movement building. Research has also shown that large-scale reductions in VAWG are possible through multi-sectoral coordinated actions of governments and civil society, and intensive advocacy efforts and media campaigns carried out by feminist organizations.¹¹ A [UNDP-UN Women report on government responses to COVID-19](#) demonstrated that feminist mobilization was critical to drive government responses to VAWG during the pandemic. Countries with strong feminist movements adopted on average 3 more

⁵ [Turkey: Withdrawal from Istanbul Convention is a pushback against women's rights, say human rights experts.](#)

⁶ Center for Women's Global Leadership (2021) Femicide Advocacy Guide <https://16dayscampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-Femicide-Advocacy-Guide.pdf>

⁷ Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (April 2022) <https://im-defensoras.org/2022/04/international-feminist-solidarity-in-the-face-of-the-illegal-cancellation-of-womens-rights-supporter-organizations-or-feminist-organizations-in-nicaragua/>

⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2019/02/women-human-rights-defenders-face-worsening-violence-warns-un-human-rights-expert>

⁹ Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2020, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2020>

¹⁰ Mama Cash (July 2020) Feminist Activism Works! A review of select literature on the impact of feminist activism in achieving women's rights. AWID (November 2020) Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Resource Feminist Movement. Htun, M & Weldon, S.L. (2012) The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005. American Political Science Review. Vol. 106, No. 3 August 2012

¹¹ Mary Ellsberg, Margarita Quintanilla & William J. Ugarte (2022) Pathways to change: Three decades of feminist research and activism to end violence against women in Nicaragua, Global Public Health, DOI: [10.1080/17441692.2022.2038652](https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2022.2038652)

measures addressing VAWG than those that do not.¹² Despite such evidence, women's rights organizations and autonomous feminist movements remain severely underfunded. Studies show that only 1% of gender-focused aid from governments goes to autonomous women's organizations¹³ and this situation is not improving despite the increased momentum and evidence of need etc.

The Spotlight Initiative has invested 146 million to civil society organizations so far and enabled 1,111 local and grassroots women's rights organizations to have greater influence and agency to work on eliminating VAWG thanks to the unprecedented investment of 500M Euros by the European Union.¹⁴ The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women has provided so far USD 198 million to 609 civil society-led initiatives in 140 countries and territories.

However, we need to do more. The [Generation Equality Forum Action Coalition on GBV Blueprint](#) is working to progressively improve and increase international funding 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.

Supporting and investing in strong, autonomous women's rights organizations and feminist movements is key to ending violence against women and girls. For these reasons, the UNiTE Campaign theme for 2022 will call for more support to activism to prevent VAWG:

“UNiTE! ACTIVISM TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS!”

The theme and activities of the UNiTE Campaign in 2022, under the global banner **UNiTE! Activism to End Violence against Women & Girls**, will aim to mobilize all UNiTE networks, civil society and women's rights organizations, organizations working with men and boys, the UN system, the Action Coalition on Gender Based Violence, government partners, human rights defenders, schools, universities, private sector, sports clubs and associations and individuals to become activists for the prevention of violence against women, to stand in solidarity with women's rights activists and to support feminist movements around the world to resist the rollback on women's rights and calling for a world free from VAWG.

3. ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES DURING THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM IN 2022

Through the 2022 theme ***“UNiTE! Activism to End Violence against Women & Girls!”***, the UNiTE campaign will:

- **Invite everyone to be an activist in preventing VAWG** through taking a stand publicly, wearing the colour orange, engaging in activities and events to raise awareness of VAWG in their local communities, joining women's rights movements and activists.
- **Mobilize all UNiTE partners and stakeholders** to engage in **activism to prevent** violence against women and girls and to **resist the rollback** on women's rights.

¹² UN Women and UNDP. 2022. Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on Gender Equality for a World in Turmoil. New York.

¹³ OECD, (2019) Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Donor Charts.

¹⁴ Spotlight Initiative (2022) Rising to the Challenge. Impact report 2020-2021

- **Amplify the voices of feminist women’s movements** in their diversity working to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls across the world.
- **Call for greater support, increase long-term, sustainable and flexible funding** from states, private sector, foundations, and other donors to autonomous girl-led & women’s rights organizations working to end violence against women and girls in all their diversity.
- **Advocate for the strengthening of protection mechanisms** to prevent and eliminate violence, harassment, threats, intimidation and discrimination against women human rights defenders and women’s rights advocates/activists in line with international standards.
- **Promote the leadership of women and girls** in their diversity and their meaningful participation in political, policy making and decision-making spaces from global to local levels including in development, humanitarian and peace processes.

4. 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’**: apply 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. See Annex 1.
- **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 ever since the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), it is time to create platforms to elevate voices of the next generation feminists who are shaping their future now.

The **colour orange** continues to be a key tool unifying all activities to bring global attention to the initiative, however, this year in light of the energy crisis, we are not calling upon partners to illuminate buildings and landmarks in orange or to do so for a very limited period on the 25th of November. We invite partners to consider different ways of painting the world orange including through decorating buildings, wearing the colour orange and to orange digital spaces throughout the 16 days.

5. KEY ACTIVITIES: “ACTIVISM to END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS!” “UNiTE to END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW,” “ORANGE THE WORLD”, “TAKE ACTION ON THIS ORANGE DAY AND DURING 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM”

In line with the 2022 global umbrella theme **UNiTE! Activism to End Violence against Women!** the Official UN Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of VAW will be held on **23 November 2022**.

The **29th of November, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day** is also a day that should be strategically leveraged to celebrate the contributions and role of women rights activists and defenders as well as to call for greater protection and accountability of states to protect women human rights defenders from violence, harassment etc.

Throughout the 16 day-long period from 25 November to 10 December, all UNiTE partners, including UN agencies, Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions, civil society, private sector, sports associations, youth groups, universities and schools are encouraged to:

- Coordinate orange events and activities at global, regional, country and local levels to promote the need for greater support and funding to women’s rights organizations as a key strategy for preventing and eliminating VAWG.
- Rollout a digital campaign focussed on resisting the pushback and featuring the work of women’s rights activists, survivors, human rights defenders etc. across the world, calling upon all actors to become activists to end violence against women.
- Call upon stakeholders, partners and individuals to register their activism and actions to orange the world and prevent violence against women to map out social mobilization events and actions across the world advocating to end violence against women.
- Participate and actively promote the online digital crowdfunding campaign under #UNTFeminist and #TrustFeminists, under the theme **“UNITE: Activism to End Violence against Women & Girls!”** every day during the 16 Days of Activism. (The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women will provide assets and social media activation package).
- Stimulate public conversations, hold virtual seminars or radio programmes under the slogan, **UNITE: Activism to End Violence against Women & Girls!”** to raise public awareness and encourage individuals, organizations and others to take action during the 16 days.
- Engage the media, opinion makers, and explore innovative approaches through diverse medium to raise awareness of and promote greater understanding of the urgent need to increase investments in inclusive, comprehensive and long-term policies, strategies, programmes and resources to prevent and respond to VAWG in public and private spaces and in particular to invest in autonomous, feminist women’s rights movements.
- Wear the colour **orange**, and **“orange”** virtual spaces e.g. websites, social media accounts etc. on the 25 November and throughout the 16 days until 10 December.

Annex 1: *WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE ON THE CAMPAIGN*

A [Survivor-centered approach](#) is to engage with survivors of violence with respect, where their consent, safety and confidentiality are prioritized. Please always adopt a “do not harm” approach, take special care and consider the possible impacts on survivors of violence and ensure that they have given informed consent for their stories to be used for campaign activities, understand that their story and/or photo will be used in the context of ending violence against women and girls. It is important to allow survivor to make their own decisions and ensure they are not pressured into any activities they do not feel comfortable with as well as to explore any potential backlash and strategies to mitigate this, such as using an alias if required. Special consideration should also be paid to any possible support needs that the survivor may require such as being accompanied by a specialist CSO worker.

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.

For more information, please refer to [Ensuring survivor-centered and empowering approaches](#)

Any events or activities coordinated should take every possible precaution to prevent and reduce any risk of sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse in line with the [Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination and Abuse of Authority Policy](#) and the [Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#). When engaging, young feminists and youth groups it is paramount to protect and safeguard children from harm. For any further information, please refer to [UNICEF’s policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children](#).