

Concept note

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence "Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!"

Background

The [16 Days of Activism](#) against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is an international campaign that takes place each year since 1991. 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 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.

Every year the United Nations Secretary-General's campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women (UNiTE), calls for global action to increase awareness and create opportunities for addressing GBV. The United Nations system participates in the 16 Days of Activism Campaign by organising a range of events: marches, exhibits, concerts, sporting events, debates, etc. The Rome-based agencies of the United Nations put together a joint programme.

2020 context

As the world retreated inside homes due to the lockdown measures introduced to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, reports showed an alarming increase in the already existing pandemic of violence against women. "Accompanying the crisis has been a spike in domestic violence reporting, at exactly the time that services, including rule of law, health and shelters, are being diverted to address the pandemic," stated the UN Secretary-General's report, "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19".

This year, we invite colleagues and partners to take a look at how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected gender inequalities at a domestic level- increasing not only physical violence against women and girls, but also sexual, economic and psychological violence.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a rise in domestic violence worldwide, obliging many people to share restricted physical space with their abusers during enforced lockdowns. The lack of participation of women and girls in many of the decision-making processes regarding COVID-19 response worldwide furthered the vulnerable status of women and girls who experience domestic violence (*DV*) and intimate partner violence (*IPV*). Quarantine and lockdown measures have also led to a closing of many schools worldwide, increasing the burden of unpaid care and domestic work that is mostly placed on women and girls.

The economic recession that is taking place as a consequence of the lockdowns and new measures has affected women harder than men. With less alternatives to economic independence, many women and girls who experience violence could not leave their abusers. Furthermore, due to the lockdowns and the closure of services to the public, many women and girls could not access sexual and reproductive health services.

The 2020 16 Days of Activism campaign provides an opportunity for all the Rome-based employees and partners to reflect on the different ways in which the global pandemic has contributed to gender inequality and gender-based violence.

This year the 16 Days Campaign will take place under our 2020 global theme: "Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!". Building from the UN Inter-Agency Statement on Violence Against Women and Girls in the context of COVID-19, there is a call for uniting efforts in the following areas:

✓ **FUND:**

- Prioritize funding for a minimum package of essential services that include GBV prevention in COVID-19 fiscal stimulus packages.
- Make flexible funding available for women's rights organizations working at the nexus of COVID-19 and GBV
- Prioritize funding for GBV prevention and response in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19

✓ **PREVENT:**

- Declare national zero tolerance policy for GBV with a concrete action plan in place.
- Launch a COVID-19 behaviour change social mobilization campaign (attention on system & social norm shifts, positive masculinities, and GBV against women, including those facing intersecting inequalities).

✓ **RESPOND:**

- Undertake explicit measures so that services for survivors of GBV are maintained as essential during COVID-19 lockdowns, including ensuring a continuum of adequate criminal justice response.
- Ensure minimum essential services maintained and adopted where they are non-existent.

✓ **COLLECT:**

- Collect data for improvement of GBV services and programmes (always ensuring survivor-centred and ethical safety standards).

RBA Campaign

On 25 November – the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls – the RBAs will open the annual 16 Days of Activism with an event hosted by IFAD. The closing event of the campaign will be hosted by FAO on 10 December, Human Rights Day. During the 16 days a series of events, awareness raising, and behavioural change sessions will be organised by the RBAs.

The objectives of the campaign are:

- **Create awareness** – among employees and partners about GBV and other forms of violence, its roots and causes, how they have increased during the COVID-19 crisis;
- **Share information** – about actions (programmes, projects, services etc.) that tackle, respond and address GBV and the other increased gender inequalities
- **Advocate for gender equality** as means to prevent any form of GBV.
- **Call for renewed commitment and action.**

Key messages

- Accompanying the COVID-19 pandemic has been a spike in GBV reporting. Response and recovery actions needs to ensure measures are taken to prevent and address GBV.
- The logic of GBV is based on gender stereotypes, prevention efforts should focus on transforming norms and behaviour.
- There is a need for more and better data to inform evidence-based programming in order to address GBV.

- COVID-19 has contributed to gender inequality and gender-based violence. We must work together towards ending both.
- Domestic and intimate partner violence are everybody's business. By promoting gender equality, we can put an end to gender-based violence."
- By assuring women's participation in important decision-making processes, such as emergency frameworks, we can help prevent gender-based violence.
- COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting rural women's productive, reproductive and income-generating capacities, by reducing their economic opportunities and access to nutritious foods, while at the same time increasing their workloads and escalating their risks to gender-based violence.
- Investing in women's leadership and engaging them in the design and implementation of COVID-19 response strategies is critical to ensure that their perspectives and needs are adequately considered.