



## International Women's Day 2009

Backgrounder

### Women and Men United to End Violence against Women and Girls

*"All of us – men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders – have a responsibility to help end violence against women. States must honour their commitments to prevent violence, bring perpetrators to justice and provide redress to victims. And each of us must speak out in our families, workplaces and communities, so that acts of violence against women cease."*

*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon*

In February 2008, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched his campaign, "UNite to End Violence against Women," a multi-year effort aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in all parts of the world.

Violence against women not only constitutes a gross violation of human rights but also has enormous social and economic costs, and undercuts the contribution of women to development, peace and security. It poses a serious threat to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In recognition of the urgent need to bring women and men together in this endeavour, the theme of this year's **International Women's Day** – which falls on 8 March but will be observed with a number of United Nations activities on 5 March – is **Women and Men United to End Violence against Women and Girls**. Dating back nearly a century, Women's Day provides an opportunity to pay tribute to the achievements of women and to highlight the needs and concerns of women on the national, regional and global agenda. This year, the Day provides an opportunity to call women and men everywhere to action by shining a spotlight on the issue of violence against women and the goals of the Secretary-General's campaign.

Stretching from 2008 to 2015, the campaign calls on governments, 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. It builds on existing

international legal and policy frameworks and harnesses the strong momentum around the issue, reflected in a growing number of initiatives by UN system partners, Governments and NGOs.

"There is no blanket approach to fighting violence against women. What works in one country may not lead to desired results in another. Each nation must devise its own strategy," said the Secretary-General at the launch of the campaign. "But there is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable."

#### Violence against Women: The Situation

- Today, many women – in some countries as many as one in three – are beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in their lifetimes.
- Worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime.
- Half of the women who die from homicides are killed by their current or former husbands or partners.
- For women aged 15 to 44 years, violence is a major cause of death and disability.
- More than 80 per cent of trafficking victims are women.
- More than 130 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation.
- On the basis of data collected from 24,000 women in 10 countries, between 55 per cent and 95 per cent of women who have been physically abused by their partners have never contacted NGOs, shelters or the police for help.

#### UNite to End Violence against Women

- The overall objective of the Secretary-General's campaign is to raise public awareness and increase political will and resources for preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls – in all parts of the world.
- The Secretary-General calls on governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media, the entire United Nations system, and individual

women and men to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.

- The campaign provides a collective platform to engage a wide range of stakeholders in an unprecedented level of global mobilization, linking their initiatives to the Secretary-General's efforts.

Five key outcomes have been set as the benchmarks which the campaign aims to inspire all countries to achieve by 2015:

- National laws are in place and enforced to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls in line with international human rights standards.
- National plans of action are adopted that are multi-sectoral and adequately resourced, with implementation under way.
- Data collection and analysis systems are institutionalized and periodic surveys are undertaken on the prevalence of various forms of violence against women and girls.
- National and/or local campaigns are launched and social mobilization engages a diverse range of civil society actors in preventing violence and supporting abused women and girls.
- Sexual violence in conflict situations is systematically addressed in all peace and security policy and funding frameworks and mechanisms for protection and prevention of systematic rape are implemented.

By 2015, the campaign aims to make an impact in terms of an increased number of countries, at both national and local levels, with dedicated laws, action plans, and budgets in place and implemented, including programmes for prevention, and availability of integrated services for abused women and girls. The campaign also hopes to make a significant contribution to awareness-raising and social mobilization to end all forms of violence against women and girls, and to engage men and boys in prevention and response efforts.

### **The Way Forward: Men and Women Working Together**

The engagement of men – both young and old – in the struggle to end violence against women is integral to its success. In this vein, the Secretary-General has announced the formation of a Network of Men Leaders who will work to inspire men everywhere through their commitment to eliminating violence against women and girls.

Promising examples exist of coalitions in which men address the need to end community acquiescence to violence against women:

- The White Ribbon Campaign encourages men and boys to pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. The campaign has developed educational materials and action kits aimed at transforming men's attitudes that have been distributed to schools, universities, corporations and labour unions. Since its inception in Canada in 1991, the White Ribbon Campaign has spread to 47 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Pacific (see [www.whiteribbon.ca](http://www.whiteribbon.ca)).
- Instituto ProMundo, a Brazilian non-governmental organization based in Rio de Janeiro, works to engage men – particularly young men in Rio's favela communities – in promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women, youth and children. Now replicated in more than 20 countries, the organization's campaigns and educational projects help men and boys question traditional "norms" associated with masculinity and to choose not to engage in harmful behaviour (see [www.promundo.org.br](http://www.promundo.org.br)).

### **Resources**

International Women's Day 2009:

[www.un.org/events/women/iwd/](http://www.un.org/events/women/iwd/)

Secretary-General's campaign: <http://endviolence.un.org>

UN Action against Rape and Sexual Violence in Conflict:

[www.stoprapenow.org](http://www.stoprapenow.org)

Say NO to Violence Against Women (UNIFEM):

[www.saynotoviolence.org](http://www.saynotoviolence.org)

V-Day Campaign (supported by UNICEF):

<http://newsite.vday.org/>

16 Days of Activism (supported by UNFPA, UNIFEM, WHO):

[www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html](http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html)

WomenWatch–UN Information and Resources on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women:

[www.un.org/womenwatch](http://www.un.org/womenwatch)

UN Special Advisor on Gender Issues & Advancement of Women:

[www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi)