16 days of activism UNiTE! Activism to End Violence against Women & Girls

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual campaign beginning on 25 November and ending on 10 December. This year, the United Nations marks this event under the theme “UNiTE! Activism to end violence against women and girls.”

The UN Secretary-General has galvanized the UN system, Member States and other actors to put an end to Violence against Women and Girls (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 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) backs the Secretary-General’s call. We have joined our UN partners in promoting four key pillars of action: funding essential services, prevention, improving police and justice action, and collecting data.

Global estimates show that the prevalence of gender-based violence against women remains high and that women and girls in all regions face gender-related killing. This newsletter showcases some of the initiatives by UNODC at Headquarters and in the Field during this year’s campaign.
The available evidence shows that there has been too little progress in preventing gender-related killings of women and girls. Concerted, urgent action is needed, to improve the knowledge base and strengthen responses to gender-related killings and other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. By ensuring that every victim is counted, we can ensure that perpetrators are held to account and justice is served. By improving understanding of all types of gender-related killings of women and girls, we can strengthen prevention and improve responses.

The report features policy recommendations to support comprehensive and multisectoral approaches to prevent and address gender-related killings and other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. The full report is available here.

"No woman or girl should fear for her life because of who she is. To stop all forms of gender-related killings of women and girls, we need to count every victim, everywhere, and improve understanding of the risks and drivers of femicide so we can design better and more effective prevention and criminal justice responses. UNODC is proud to launch the 2022 femicide study with UN Women to galvanize global action and salute the efforts of women’s rights organizations around the world to end this crime."

Ms. Ghada Waly,
UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly
An effective police force must represent the people that it serves; men as well as women. To achieve genuine gender equality, women must be included in all spheres of society including security and law enforcement. Additionally, in certain contexts, for instance, in addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), female officers can carry out tasks that male officers cannot. UNODC has been implementing the Criminal Investigation Program (CIP) in Somalia to support the Federal Government and Member States of Somalia in enhancing the criminal investigation capacity of the Somali Police Force in facing serious and complex crimes such as SGBV and human trafficking. Watch the video on the UNODC Criminal Investigation Program (CIP) in Somalia and how it has impacted the Somali Police Force regarding gender equality. Find out more here.

The case of South Africa suggests that gender-related killings of women and girls can be prevented through comprehensive laws and policies aimed at preventing gender-based violence against women and girls, firearms control legislation and activism of women’s rights and community-based organizations. More research is required to better understand what is driving increases in gender-related killings of women and girls in certain contexts and what the enabling factors and pathways to prevention are in contexts where there have been decreases.

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Gender-related killings of women and girls: Improving data to improve responses to femicide/feminicide (UNODC & UNWOMEN, 2022, p. 38)
High-level representatives of the prosecution service, lawyer, gender experts and UN representatives discussed the consequences of lack of gender responsiveness in public prosecutions, barriers to access to justice of victims of VAWG, and measures to increase gender responsiveness in public prosecutions of violence against women and girls.

Speaking at the event, Standing Deputy Prosecutor General of the Supreme People's Procuracy of Viet Nam Nguyen Huy Tien said that the White Ribbon Breakfast was an invaluable opportunity to strengthen capacity of not only prosecutorial officers but also other criminal justice officers to address the common issue of preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, and to better protect the legitimate rights of women and girls during the criminal justice process.

The Trial of Rape: Understanding the criminal justice system response to sexual violence in Thailand and Viet Nam analyzes how the varying criminal justice systems in Thailand and Viet Nam respond to reported cases of rape and sexual assault, and to identify the key institutional factors associated with the disposition of cases in these countries. In doing so, the study aims to understand where and how attrition of sexual violence cases occurs and identify strategic entry points for strengthening the administration of justice in this area. The study is available here.
Partners UNiTE to mentor children during 16 Days of Activism in Kenya

Violations of the rights of women, girls and boys have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in many countries. The rising cost of living, prolonged drought and associated hunger have also contributed to an increase in SGBV – as well as violence against children – alongside mental illness, teenage pregnancies and child marriage. Consequently, the Government of Kenya has called for more partnerships to support their responses.

The advocacy objectives for 2022 include mobilizing people to engage in activism to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) and engaging people to be activists in preventing VAWG through taking a stand publicly, wearing the colour orange and engaging in activities to raise awareness of VAWG in their local communities.

“Violence does not respect age, sex, gender, race, education or occupation. We have a responsibility as children and adults to hold hands and advocate against it throughout our lives.” the Principal Children Officer at DCS Kenya, Mr Stanley Rotich, said.

At the event, UNODC partnered with university students who offered peer mentorship to the children and organized fun learning activities for the mentorship day. Guided by UNODC and DCS, the peer-to-peer mentorship relations will form long-term structures of engagement for counselling and mentorship among the children and university students.

Mentorship conversations were held to provide guidance in personal development; prevention of violence against women, girls and children; and employability skills training with an emphasis on leadership, breakaway sessions for peer-to-peer mentorship conducted by the Women Students Mentorship Association/University of Nairobi to improve self-esteem and confidence among the children.

The children wore orange t-shirts representing a brighter future, free from violence against women and children. The event also included tree planting sessions and ‘edutainment’ performances by the children to foster their imagination and focus on the theme of preventing violence against women and children. Find out more [here](#)

Through the PLEAD partnership, UNODC has partnered with NCAJ in strengthening a multi-agency approach in investigation, prosecution and rehabilitation of perpetrators of crime including SGBV and violators of human rights as well as providing support to the victims of crime. Through the National Council on the Administration of Justice, UNODC has also advocated for the need to undertake expeditious disposal of justice in the best interest of vulnerable groups e.g., women, children and youth through improved reporting, investigations, evidence handling and witness management.
A training was organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) through the HAYA Joint Programme to increase participants’ knowledge on gender and violence concepts, as well as their technical capacities in photo and video editing and production towards solution-oriented journalism.

“Media offers great opportunities to raise awareness around Violence against Women and Girls. As such, the HAYA Joint Programme works intensively to better equip journalists with knowledge and skills so that they can effectively report on gender issues without any biases and use their unique space to promote gender equality,” says HAYA Joint Programme Manager Hazam Tahbub.

Twenty-year-old trainee journalist and media university student Razan says that, after participating in comprehensive training for 25 male and female journalists and media students, she has a better understanding of gender-sensitive reporting and the change it can bring. While Razan used to think gender issues were only related to women, she now knows this is not the case. “In our society and our customs and traditions, the concept of violence against women and gender-based violence is very sensitive. But we now know what this means and what gender issues are. For me, gender-based violence cases and concepts were not clear. After the training, these concepts became clearer.” Razan says she now understands that attitudes towards women are shaped by society as a whole and that everyone, regardless of their gender, must be part of the solution to eliminate violence against women. And now, she has the skills to translate her knowledge into communication tools to influence both women and men across the country. For Razan, media is a strong instrument in this change, but it will require time. Find out more here.

Gender awareness and sensitivity in Palestinian media

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, almost 30 per cent of currently or formerly married women are subjected to physical violence by their husbands and 14 per cent of single women by a household member, according to a survey by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. More than half of these women do not seek help, either because they do not know where to find help or for fear of repercussions.

The media plays a vital role in helping to address this issue. In today’s ever globalized world, media has the scope and influence to change perceptions and educate the wider population. But first, media professionals themselves must gain an understanding of the issues involved and the most effective methods to communicate the need for change to the public.

With this in mind, the HAYA Joint Programme is working directly with journalists and media university graduates on how the media deals with issues of violence against women and challenges the harmful attitudes and behaviours that justify it.