



## GW I UPDATE – 11 December 2024 – Special Edition



As the **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** concludes, GWI is pleased to present this Special Edition Update summarizing its 16 Days of Activism campaign that ran across social media platforms. By sharing crucial data and advocating for immediate action, **GW I reaffirms its 105-year commitment to raising awareness about the harmful effects of GBV on women and girls' education, family and professional lives.**

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### — Why 16 Days of Activism —

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#### **Why 16 Days? The Historical Significance of This Global Movement**

In 1960, three sisters, Patria, Minerva and Maria Tessa Mirabal, political activists who opposed the cruelty of the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, led underground movements to expose the systemic violence of Trujillo's oppression. Until their assassination on 25 November, they remained resolute in their activism. Their death became a symbol of feminist resistance and ignited a public outrage, ultimately leading to the fall of Trujillo's regime. In 2000, the United Nations (UN) officially designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in recognition and in honour of the Mirabal sisters.

An ongoing movement is **Orange Day**, observed on the 25th of every month as part of the UN Women campaign "*Orange the World*", which aims to bring attention to and take action against GBV. The colour symbolizes a bright future free from violence!

The 16 Days of Activism campaign begins on 25 November and concludes on 10 December, which is the International Day for Human Rights. The day serves as a reminder to all that GBV is a fundamental violation of human rights. It is a powerful campaign that empowers individuals, raises awareness, offers a platform for voices to be heard, and holds us accountable for the realities faced by many women and girls globally. **GW I advocates for the**

elimination of GBV as a cornerstone in advancing the rights of women and girls, while raising awareness about its critical connection to education and human rights.

— GWI Campaign —

**Breaking the Silence, Reclaiming Our Power**

Each year, GWI leads a targeted campaign during the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV. You can explore our previous efforts [HERE](#).

This year’s campaign comprised 47 tailored posts, each spotlighting one of GWI’s affiliates, to provide resources and vital information on how women can report GBV and domestic violence in their country, including contact details for national and local hotlines. With this campaign, **GWI aimed to inform victims where to report violence, encourage victims and families to amplify their voices, and provide support for violence survivors.**

<p><b>HONG KONG</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>Legend: Forms of Domestic Violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexual abuse</li> <li>Physical abuse</li> <li>Psychological violence</li> <li>Other</li> </ul> <p>Women experiencing domestic violence often face multiple forms of abuse, including sexual assault, emotional violence, verbal intimidation, and financial or social isolation, severely affecting their mental health and sense of helplessness.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>In Hong Kong, data shows that only about 40% of victims of violence are willing to seek help, with just 10% reaching out to professionals. This reluctance is driven by feelings of shame, helplessness, emotional distress, fear of being blamed, and concerns about the potential impact on their relationships.</p> <p>GWI calls on the Hong Kong government to address the barriers that prevent women from seeking help, including conservative social norms, misconceptions about violence, and ineffective laws.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>HKFVC Women Helpline: 23 86 62 5556 Social Welfare Hotline: 23 43 22 35 Harmony House: 23 22 94 34 (available 24 hours)</p>	<p><b>DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>200,000 women sexually assaulted during the conflict</p> <p>For over two decades, the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been struggling with conflict, with women and girls enduring the worst of the violence. Rape has been wielded as a weapon of war, with an estimated 200,000 women sexually assaulted during the conflict's first 12 years.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>Sexual violence remains widespread in the DRC today, with women and girls facing sexual and physical abuse from both combatants and intimate partners. Approximately one-third of Congolese women report experiencing sexual violence at some point in their lives.</p> <p>GWI calls on the DRC government to establish accountability frameworks to combat gender-based violence, including national case management protocols and incident databases. It is critical to address the lack of funding for such initiatives, which hampers efforts to effectively assist victims.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>NGOs to contact for help: <a href="https://www.solepacific.org/">https://www.solepacific.org/</a> or <a href="http://www.firdc.org/r/">http://www.firdc.org/r/</a> Réseau Congo Genre et Développement (CI-af RDC): (+243) 818 911 638 or (+243) 998 368 874 or <a href="mailto:2congs@yahoo.fr">2congs@yahoo.fr</a> (email)</p>	<p><b>BANGLADESH</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>54%</p> <p>The rates of violence against women in Bangladesh are among the highest in the world, with 18% of married women agreeing that tradition allows women to be beaten by their husbands. About 54% of married or previously married women reported experiences of physical or sexual violence from spouses, which is much higher than the global average of 30%.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>The magnitude of spousal violence against women is well-documented in Bangladesh, with rural communities facing some of the highest rates. This violence presents a significant barrier to women's development, limiting their safety, health, and economic opportunities.</p> <p>GWI calls on the Bangladeshi government to implement comprehensive primary prevention interventions aimed at reducing the risk of violence against women at all levels, individual, family, community, and societal.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>National Helpline: 10921 Government Helpline for Domestic Violence: 199 or website <a href="http://rnhc.gov.bd/">http://rnhc.gov.bd/</a></p>
<p><b>CYPRUS</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>28%</p> <p>Despite advancements in promoting women's human rights, Cyprus's institutional response to gender-based violence remains inadequate. At least 3% of women have experienced some form of domestic violence, encompassing emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>The responsible institutions often lack the necessary capacity, transparency, and coordination to protect victims effectively. Cyprus has not established essential support facilities such as rape crisis centers, sexual violence referral centers, or an adequate number of shelters to protect survivors.</p> <p>GWI calls on the Cypriot government to urgently address these gaps by improving legal protections and increasing institutional support.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family helpline: 1440 (phone) or 99-984042 (SMS)</p>	<p><b>BOLIVIA</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>Although Bolivia criminalized domestic violence and femicide with strict penalties in 2013, also mandating the establishment of women's shelters and specialized courts for gender-based crimes, femicide rates remained alarmingly high. In 2017, the rate was reported at two femicides per 100,000 women.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>These numbers are striking, yet there is a lack of comprehensive and regularly published data on gender-based violence in Bolivia. This is a pervasive issue that remains vastly underreported, leaving the true extent of its impact unknown.</p> <p>GWI calls on the Bolivian government to urgently combat gender-based violence through practical measures that enhance reporting mechanisms, address existing gaps, create a safer environment for all women and girls, and ensure effective support for victims.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>Help line: 156 - 800 10 4100</p>	<p><b>FRANCE</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>On average, a woman (EU) every 3 days is a consequence of intimate partner violence</p> <p>In France, 44 % of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence and 52 % of people knew a woman within their circle of friends and family who has been a victim of domestic violence, which is 11 % higher than in the EU overall.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>Since 2012, France has strengthened its legislation on issues like sexual harassment, human trafficking, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, and prostitution exploitation. Action plans are adopted every three years to improve enforcement of these laws. However, these measures remain insufficient.</p> <p>GWI calls on the French government to further enhance support systems, expanding protection services and increasing access to safe shelters for women.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>National Emergency Helpline: 3019 Children Emergency Helpline: 119</p>
<p><b>USA</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>In the US, 24 hours</p> <p>From 1994-2010 4 in 5 victims of IPV were female with ages 18-34 experiencing the highest rates of IPV. Oklahoma has the highest rates of DV for women at 49.1% followed by Kentucky at 45.3%.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>Across the states of the USA domestic violence is widely spread even with the decrease in cases over the years. However, many cases stay unreported due to fear in seeking help or the lack of resources available in their area, therefore data we have might not be the actual representation of domestic violence.</p> <p>GWI calls on the American government to advocate for women rights, implement laws and policy that protect the victim not the perpetrator and increase awareness around DV, so more women feel safe in coming forward.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>National Domestic Violence Helpline: 1 800 799 7233 or TTY 1800773324 Domestic shelter: Org</p>	<p><b>ZIMBABWE</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>47%</p> <p>Cases of intimate partner violence</p> <p>Zimbabwe 39.4% of women experience a form of DV and 11.6% of women have faced sexual violence. Cases of intimate partner violence is especially high at 47% and is the most common form of violence.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>Violence against women is an ongoing issue in Zimbabwe with many cases being committed by intimate partners, which further increased during COVID 19. Many women face the consequence of traditional cultures that normalizes violence as a means of power and control. Increased fear leaves many cases unreported due to culture stigmas and partner reluctance.</p> <p>GWI calls on the Zimbabwe government to implement youth organisations, encourage women to pursue leadership roles and promote positive social norms and attitudes at a national and community level.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>Musasa GBV Helpline: Ecosw: 08080074, Netone: 08010074, Telcel: 0731080074 Anti Domestic violence council: +263 242 700005 or 708866</p>	<p><b>FIJI</b></p> <p><b>FAST FACTS</b></p> <p>6.4%</p> <p>In Fiji, 64% of Fijian women (almost 2 in 3) aged 18-49 who have ever been in an intimate relationship experienced physical and/or sexual violence or both by a husband or intimate partner in their lifetime – almost double the global average.</p> <p><b>CALL TO ACTION</b></p> <p>The Fiji National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls was initiated to strengthen gender-based violence prevention programs across the country. However, without consistent data collection and transparent reporting, there is no reliable standard for measuring progress.</p> <p>GWI calls on the Fijian government to ensure the effective implementation of the Action Plan, prioritising protection for victims and ensuring freedom from ongoing harassment.</p> <p><b>HELPLINE INFO</b></p> <p>Fiji Women's Crisis Center: 1560 or 331 8300 or 9209470</p>



The campaign featured the **gladiolus flower** as its cover image: a symbol of strength, courage and integrity, reflecting the resilience of many women overcoming the challenges of domestic violence. The campaign tagline, "**Breaking the Silence, Reclaiming Our Power**," calls on individuals and communities to stand up against violence and embrace empowerment in the face of adversity.

The campaign launched on all GWI social media channels on 25 November and included multiple posts per day through 10 December. Each post offers important information for reporting and surviving GBV. **Find the full campaign in English is [HERE](#) and the Spanish version is [HERE](#)!**

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## — Global Data —

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### **A Global Crisis of GBV**

The availability of data on violence against women and girls has improved considerably in recent years and data on the prevalence of intimate partner violence is now available for at least 161 countries. Yet, the insights gathered from GWI's campaign and research underscore a harsh reality: GBV is a pervasive global issue.

No country is exempt from the pervasive issue of GBV. While the scale and form of violence may differ, its prevalence remains deeply concerning everywhere. The numbers are alarming:

- In 2023, **every 10 minutes**, partners and family members killed a woman or a girl intentionally;
- **1 in 3 women** experience violence in their lifetime;
- In 2023, around **51,100 women and girls** worldwide were killed by their intimate partners or other family members;
- On average, **140 women or girls** are killed every day by someone in their own family.

*(Source: UN Women)*

These numbers are a clear reminder that GBV is a shared challenge requiring urgent global action. GWI's campaign reinforces the necessity for coordinated efforts, policy reforms, and public awareness to end this crisis and ensure safety, dignity, and equality for women and girls worldwide.

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## — Break the Silence —

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### **The Role of Helplines and Reporting**

Globally, less than 40% of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort. In the majority of countries with available data on this issue, women who do seek help look to family and friends and very few seek support from formal institutions, such as police and health services. Alarming, less than 10% of those seeking help appealed to the police.

This underscores the urgent need to overcome stigma and fear that often prevent women from reporting violence. Many women fear being judged, blamed, or not believed, which can silence them and perpetuate their suffering. Society's shame and negative perceptions about victims can often make women feel isolated or powerless. Overcoming these barriers is essential for women to feel empowered to come forward and seek the support they need.

GWI's message is clear: reporting violence is a vital step towards ending it. This is why our campaign provides resources for each country, such as helplines and shelters, to ensure that women have access to the support they need to reclaim their safety, dignity, and strength. It is essential that women feel confident their voices will be heard, their rights respected, and their cases treated with the seriousness they deserve. By offering these essential resources, **GWI equips women to seek justice and begin their path to healing, with the confidence that they are supported every step of the way.**

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## — Take Action —

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### **Urgent Call to Action**

In 2022, only 14% of all women and girls (about 557 million) were living in countries with robust legal protection to guarantee women's fundamental human rights. This is deeply alarming. The 16 Days of Activism serve as an opportunity to revitalize global commitments to combat GBV, and to call for accountability and action from governments.

GBV is deeply rooted in our societal foundations, with a history that stretches back for generations. It remains a longstanding issue that has shaped culture, traditions, and systems, influencing how individuals are treated. For many women, GBV is normalized, silenced, or overlooked. A lack of education, child marriages, harmful cultural traditions, and the fear of being shamed or losing their children are just a few of the reasons behind the prevalence of domestic violence and the barriers that prevent women and girls from reporting it.

GWI calls upon NFA governments to take urgent action to:

- **Expand access to education for girls and women**, which can reduce vulnerability to violence and promote gender equality. Encouraging women and girls to pursue beyond primary education.
- **Implement policies and legislation** that protect girls from child marriages.
- **Engage men and boys in gender equality education** to challenge harmful norms and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women.
- **Fund prevention programs and provide post-report resources** to support individuals on their recovery journey.
- **Actively combat stigmas and taboos** that leave women susceptible to abuse as well as preventing them from seeking help and justice.

- **Establish safe spaces and shelters** for women and children, where they can receive immediate protection and support.
- **Strengthen laws and ensuring strict enforcement** to protect survivors and hold perpetrators accountable.
- **Develop and offer free community-based prevention programs** that address the root causes of GBV, including inequality and discrimination. Especially raising awareness about the harm caused by traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation, that deny women control and consent over their bodies.
- **Improve data collection and research** on GBV to better understand its scope, root causes, and effective interventions.
- **Provide comprehensive support services**, including legal, psychological, and medical assistance, for survivors.

These actions are vital in reducing GBV and fundamental in helping women and girls have their basic human rights met. It's alarming how many countries lack support for women, overlooking violence and insufficient legal help. **GWI's campaign calls upon its NFAs, holding them accountable and encouraging individuals to use the information to promote change.**

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## — Voices of GWI Scholars —

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### Voices of Young Women

GWI participated in a thoughtful and engaging discussion with students from our Teachers for Rural Futures programme about GBV, and our 16 Days of Activism campaign. **Read below some of the inspiring comments the students expressed towards the campaign!**

The campaign against GBV calls for people's action for instance through putting strict laws. I would like the community to be engaged to combat GBV by empowering individuals to stand together with their neighbors.

It's difficult for women of our community to report domestic violence because of the stigmas they have. Helplines are great but many would not use them due to the fear of being shamed.

A lot of domestic violence is normalised, and many women don't look for help because they don't see it as a problem.

I thought Uganda would have the highest level of violence, so I was surprised by the stats of domestic violence in other countries.

It's important for schools to be a safe place for girls, offering support, help and an escape from violence experienced at home or in the community.



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## — Special Thanks —

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“On behalf of Graduate Women International, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our talented interns, **Elena Bauchiero and Connie Preston**, whose dedication and hard work brought the 16 Days of Activism campaign to life. Your creativity, passion, and commitment made this campaign a resounding success, amplifying GWI’s message and reaching audiences around the world. Thank you for your contributions to advancing GWI's mission and making a tangible impact in the fight against GBV, “says Stacy Dry Lara, GWI Executive Director.

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Empowering women and girls through lifelong education for leadership, decision-making and peace.

GWI, formerly IFUW, is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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