



International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women Orange the World through United Activism

November 25th marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, also known as Orange Day. Each year, the day is dedicated to spreading awareness of the issue and calling for action to eradicate violence against women. **This day is significant as violence against women, particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence, are a global public health problem and a violation of women's human rights** (WHO, 2021). It is estimated that 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime and about 27% of women between 15-49 years have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner. Gender-based violence can have an immense negative impact on women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health.

The most extreme and brutal manifestation of gender-based violence is femicide. A recent report on gender-related killings of women and girls by the UNODC and UN Women (2022) showcased that 81 000 women and girls were intentionally killed in 2021 of which 56 per cent was killed by intimate partners or other family members at home [compared to 11 per cent of males victim of homicide]. The actual number is however higher as roughly four in ten women and girls were intentionally killed in 2021, insufficient information was available to identify their deaths as femicide. Homes should be safe for all women and girls and not a place of fear.

Risk factors, such as interpersonal violence, limited access to economic opportunities resulting in poverty and unemployment, substance use, and patriarchal gender norms, contribute to gender-based violence. The correlation between substance abuse and violent behaviour has been well documented in scientific literature, showcasing that **there is a strong link between substance use and domestic, gender-based violence**. The use of substances by the intimate partner can lead to a loss of control, continuation of negative behaviour despite its consequences, and physical and verbal abuse. When looking specifically at domestic violence, which falls under gender-based violence, about 92% of the reported cases involved substance use, mostly alcohol (Juergens 2020). Simultaneously, substances are often used by women to cope with the physical and mental pain involved in situations of perpetrated violence. This can lead to a situation where the violator is not only more aggressive, but the victim is having more difficulty determining the danger they are actually in when under influence, defending themselves, or calling for help.

Therefore, taken NOW in a comprehensive and collaborative way to protect women today, tomorrow, and in the future. The theme of this year **"UNiTE! Activism to End Violence against Women and Girls"** shines a spotlight on the powerful role of the women's rights movement in preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls and calls for further mobilisation of people to support efforts in ending violence against women and push back against the rollback on women's rights. Only together with families, communities, civil society, health care providers, policymakers, and other key stakeholders can long-lasting change be created. We need to improve the raising awareness activities in communities to address stigma and shame. Prevention and support services for families are key interventions to prevent, address, and stop violence. Healthcare providers will need to broaden their understanding and training to provide the best support on all levels for women and girls facing violence. Civil society plays an important role in empowering women and girls and is the most important advocate for the rights of women and girls. Policymakers need to implement, monitor, and evaluate efforts that prevent violence and improve the conditions for support for those facing violence to be widely available and accessible.

By starting today, we can save a life tomorrow and decrease gender-based violence structurally long-term.



Should you be a victim of gender-based violence or know someone who is, we strongly encourage you to make use of the support in your country. Many countries launched [anonymous] helplines to report women and child report.

References

- Juergens, Jeffrey. 2020. What is Domestic Violence? <https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/domestic-violence/>.
- UNODC and UN Women. 2022. Gender-related killings of women and girls: Improving data to improve responses to femicide/feminicide. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/11/gender-related-killings-of-women-and-girls-improving-data-to-improve-responses-to-femicide-feminicide>
- WHO. 2021. Violence Against Women. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>