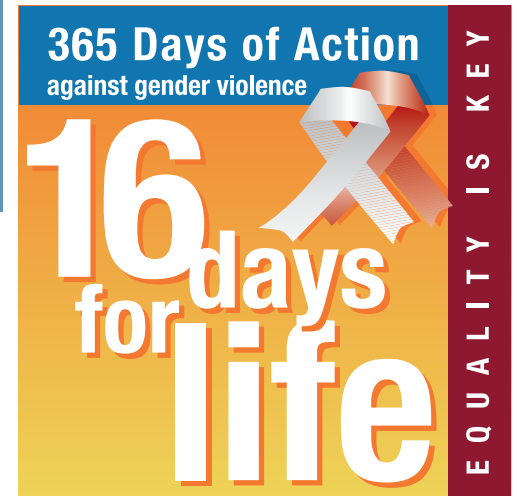


Celebrate 16 Years of 16 Days

Advance Human Rights: End Violence Against Women

2006 marks the 16th anniversary of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign!

Since 1991, the 16 Days campaign has worked to enhance the visibility of violence against women as a human rights violation. Hence, the 2006 theme reinforces an understanding that advancing human rights and ending violence against women are mutually reinforcing.



Activists have come a long way!

History: Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence came out of the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights. In June 1991, the Centre for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) with participants of the first Women's Global Institute on Women, Violence and Human Rights, a forum involving 23 women from 20 countries called for a global campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. The campaign would highlight the connections between women, violence, and human rights from 25 November to 10 December 1991. The time period encompassed four significant dates:

25 November: The International Day of No Violence Against Women. It was first observed in Latin America and a growing number of other countries around the world as "International Day of No Violence Against Women". With no standard title, it was also referred to as "No Violence Against Women Day" and the "Day to End Violence Against Women". The date was also chosen to commemorate the lives of the Mirabal sisters from the Dominican Republic were violently assassinated in 1960 during the Trujillo dictatorship

1 December: World AIDS Day. This day was first observed in 1988.

3 December: International Day of Disabled Persons. This Day was initially proclaimed to commemorate the anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of the World Programme of Action concerning Persons with Disabilities to promote understanding about disability issues and to increase awareness of gains from the integration of disabled persons in every aspect of political, social economic and cultural life. Observance of the Day should include monitoring of the implementation of recommendations agreed upon by the community of persons with disabilities and others concerned

6 December: The anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. This is when 14 women engineering students were gunned down for being feminists

10 December: Human Rights Day. On this day people around the world celebrate the adoption in 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - which states the right of all people to "life, liberty and the security of person without distinction of any kind". For more on the Declaration

Gender activists all over the world have used the campaign as a time to reflect and profile their demands to regional and international bodies and national governments in particular, to commit to ending gender based violence by:

- Providing support services for survivors
- Enhancing prevention efforts
- Instituting legal and judicial reform
- Use of international human rights instruments to address violence against women as a human rights violation, a public health crisis and a threat to human security and peace worldwide.

This work has paid some dividends. This year commemorates progress that has been made in addressing violence against women in our communities, nations, regions and around the world and calls for reflection on how to continue to advance this work.

Examples:

United Nations (UN)'s commitment

The UN has finally recognised violence against women – whether it happens in the home or elsewhere – as a human rights violation. This therefore compels states to punish perpetrators and prevent abuse. In October of 2006, the UN Secretary General released findings of an in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. Further as the United Nations undergoes internal reform, it pledged to ensure that women's human rights concerns, including violence, are fully integrated into all of the UN's agendas.

"This report acknowledges for the first time from the highest levels of the United Nations what human and women's rights advocates have documented over the past few decades..."
Charlotte Bunch, Executive Director, Centre for Women's Global Leadership.

Therefore, the 16 Days campaign provides an opportunity to capitalise on the report and pressure governments and the UN to make greater concrete commitments to eradicating violence against women

African Union (AU)'s commitment

The AU is also showing greater commitment to gender equality. For example:

- the entry into force of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa in November 2005
- the holding of the First AU Conference of Ministers Responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs in October 2005
- the establishment of the African Union Women's Committee (AUWC)
- The application of the parity principle in the AUC including the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and the Economic Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC);

Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)'s commitment

SADC's establishment of a SADC Gender Unit (GU) in June 1998 at the SADC Secretariat in Gaborone, Botswana reflects on the region's heads of state's commitment to achieve gender equality. In addition SADC heads of state signed an Addendum to the SADC Declaration on eliminating all forms of violence against women in 1997. This has gone a step further as governments and civil society are working towards elevating the declaration to protocol under the banner the SADC and Gender Campaign.

South African government commitment

Since 1999 the South African Government has marked 16 days of activism campaign, and has ensured that the campaign is extended to include issues relating to violence against children. Building on work done in partnership with civil society, the vision for the 16 Days of Activism Campaign in 2006 is to translate the campaign into a sustainable 365 Days of Action within a coordinated system of government and to strengthen the partnerships with all sectors of society.

Aluta continua!

Overall there has been progress but not without challenges. There is need for a continuous and sustained campaign against gender based violence in all our communities.

For more information:

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