



Building Momentum · Fostering Activism

#VAWFree GBV Prevention Social Media Campaign on Violence against Women

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The GBV Prevention Network embarked on a social media campaign to raise awareness about violence against women from October 31st – November 4th, 2016.

Violence against women and girls (VAW/G) is common in most parts of the world and is now being addressed globally as a public health, social policy and human rights concern. Global estimates indicate that 30% of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual partner violence,ⁱ 7% of women worldwide have experienced non-partner sexual assault. Roughly 100–140 million girls and women have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) and 70 million have been married before the age of 18 yearsⁱⁱ.

Historically and to date girls and women have a subordinate status in society. The power that men have and are given comes from attitudes, behaviors and expectations that all women and men learn as members of their community. Generally boys are taught that it is natural and acceptable to be tough or macho. As they grow older, they are taught that being a man means being the financial provider and head of the household, being sexually aggressive and experienced, and not showing emotion. Girls on the other hand are taught to be nurturing or sensitive. As they grow older, they are taught that being a woman means taking care of children and the home, remaining passive and uninterested in sex, and continuing to nurture others.

The roles and traits associated with men are seen as more valuable than those associated with women, giving men more power than women. Men are raised to believe that they are entitled to different types of privileges than women, including obedience within the home, access to sex, and control of all family matters. The socialization that men by nature are more powerful than women means that many men feel justified in using violence to maintain their power over women. Almost every aspect of our society—including families, schools, religious institutions, media and the government—reinforce these roles for women and men making VAW seem normal and acceptable.

Within the region, several interventions have been put in place in terms of legislation, policy, awareness raising, community mobilization, health services, shelters, legal aid, psychosocial services etc. However, the magnitude of VAW/G still remains high calling for even more creative solutions to address this complex and urgent form of systemic oppression against women and girls.

The #VAWFree Social Media Campaign of the GBV Prevention Network intends to heighten awareness of VAW/G as systemic oppression; an issue that requires urgent & sustained interventions to address it starting with individuals. In addition the campaign will highlight some prevention and response work in the region to address VAW.

All activists and practitioners address VAW are urged to join the campaign; you can spread the activism by:

- Spreading the word to your networks and increasing momentum for a #VAWFree life
- Participate in the campaign by sharing #VAWFree graphics and messages on your platforms (download the messages here <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fa4wjqrjfk4j4e/AACihf6vLcguLtpe7YnlEYU8a?dl=0>)

- Downloading and responding to the campaign blogs
- Participating in the #VAWFree tweetathon on “why we should allow room for balanced power in intimate partner relationships”
- Participate in a #VAWFree Webinar discussing survivor centered response and prevention work **4th November 2016** at 3:00pm EAT <http://bit.ly/2e1sMAg>.
- Continue the activism by participating in the Network’s 16 Days Campaign (write to www.preventgbvafrica.org for details)

ⁱ WHO (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. Geneva.

ⁱⁱ Ellsberg M, Arango DJ, Morton M, et al. Prevention of violence against women and girls: what does the evidence say? *Lancet* 2014; published online Nov 21. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61703-7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61703-7).