

# Break the **SILENCE** Break the **BARRIERS!**

How will you make education safe for girls?

## GBV Prevention Network

### 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence 2016

#### Campaign Overview

---



Building Momentum • Fostering Activism

## *Break the Silence, Break the Barriers!* *How Will You Make Education Safe for Girls?*

This year marks 25 years of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence Campaign coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Because of the Center's activism the campaign is now widespread across the globe. At the regional level the GBV Prevention Network members have been participating in the campaign since 2004. This year the global campaign will focus on the relationship between militarism and the right to education in situations of violent conflict, in relative peace, and a variety of education settings. The campaign will continue to make the links between gender-based violence and militarism, as an encompassing patriarchal system of discrimination and inequality based on our relationships with power.

For regional and global campaign alignment, the GBV Prevention Network theme will focus on making education safe for all, specifically girls and young women, by highlighting structural discrimination of women and girls throughout the education system right from the home, community, and the school setting including government policy and systems that impact girls experience at school. The campaign will explore how discrimination and other experiences in the education system lead to girls and women's experience of violence. It builds onto global efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4<sup>1</sup>

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,<sup>2</sup> 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 years.<sup>3</sup> According to UIS estimates, 24 million children will never enter a classroom. Half of all out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa will never enroll.

VAW/G is rooted firmly in gender inequality. 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. As young children, social roles (also called gender roles) are learned, (i.e. how our community believes girls and boys, women and men should act) and this has deeply negative influences on the choices, autonomy and educational experiences of girls and women.

In addition, within the home setting, because of their socially ascribed roles girls will spend more time on their household chores and less time on academic study and preparation. According to a report released by UNICEF ahead of International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October, girls between 5 and 14 years old spend 40 per cent more time, or 160 million more hours a day, on unpaid household chores and collecting water and firewood compared to boys their age<sup>4</sup>. Often girls will be withdrawn from school and married off even before they are 18 years of age, many times for the benefit of the bride price that marriage will attract. Girls will face even more disadvantages in access to education as they make their way to the school setting. They are liable to harassment, attack, kidnap and stranger rape.

Within the school setting, girls are exposed to discrimination and violence at different levels. They may face violence in the form of bullying and sexual assault from male students, teachers and other staff. Girls often drop out of school due to insufficient or in-existent facilities to cater for their special needs including menstrual hygiene. In addition to the violence they face, most of the content taught at school reinforces power imbalances between women and men, furthering the socialization process that reinforces men and boys' power over women.

The discrimination that women and girls face coupled with experiences of violence act as a barrier to their equal participation in society and also impact the development of their home, community and school.<sup>5</sup> When it comes to education, girls face gender discrimination and violence in terms of access to education and safety in educational spaces, reinforcing their subordinate status in society.

There is hope. As we all know, the majority of boys and men are not violent; they make choices that demonstrate their belief in equality, justice and respect. Similarly, most women do not condone violence against women. Yet overall, many girls and women, boys and men are silent about violence against women and the imbalance of power that perpetuates it. The 16 Days is a time where all people can speak out and address inequality and injustice against girls and women.

## Campaign Asks

This year, the GBV Prevention Network's campaign will focus on asking community members, parents, schools and policy makers to make access to education safer for girls and women. We are breaking the silence by highlighting and publicizing issues within our homes, schools and communities that act as barriers for women and girl's access to education and issues that make educational spaces unsafe. As we highlight the issue of making education safe for all, organizations can choose from and highlight any one or combination of the following issues that act as a barrier to education for girls in their own community and call attention to the issue for action.

- 1. Access to Education.** Ensure all girls are enrolled in school and remain in school till they complete higher level education
  - a. Do girls and young women access school equally in your community?
    - i. What are the numbers of female and male students at different levels of education in your community? Does the proportion change at higher levels? Why?
    - ii. Are there policies that are discriminating against girls (i.e. expulsion of pregnant girls, lack of privacy/sanitation for girls, etc)
  - b. As girls go to school what are the safety hazards they face in your community? e.g. sexual harassment, rape, kidnaping
  - c. Even when girls access education are they allowed to complete school? What are the barriers to girl's completion of education?
- 2. Safety at School.** Make school spaces safe and conducive for women and girls, ensure school facilities address their special needs
  - a. What are the available school facilities (and how do they meet the special needs of girls/ young women?) e.g. separate toilets for girls?
- 3. The Educational System.** Challenge the systems that reinforce negative stereotypes and power imbalances faced by girls. Ensure the curriculum and text books encourage and portray gender equality
  - a. What is the content that is taught at school does it reinforce discrimination of girls and young women – later denying them opportunities? (are schools setting up the seeds of power imbalance? Do they reinforce the notions that boys are more valuable than girls?)
  - b. Are girls and young women encouraged to participate as their male counterparts are?
  - c. Do girls and young women face sexual harassment/ sexual violence from teachers and male students?

*16 Days of Activism is an opportunity for focusing energy toward positive change. How will you get involved?*

## (Endnotes)

- 1 Sustainable development goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>
- 2 WHO (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. Geneva.
- 3 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).
- 4 UNICEF. (October 7, 2016). Press release: girls spend 160 million more hours than boys doing household chores everyday
- 5 Garcia-Moreno C, Zimmerman C, Morris-Gehring A, et al. Addressing violence against women: a call to action. *Lancet* 2014; published online Nov 21. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61830-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61830-4)