

**16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
TO PREVENT
VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN
PRESS
RELEASE**

**VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN**

**THE SILENT
EPIDEMIC**
IS YOUR VOICE BEING HEARD?

ACTIVISTS ACROSS AFRICA CALL ON LEADERS TO TAKE 5 ACTIONS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!

GBV Prevention Network members, human rights activists, health providers and community members from Addis Ababa to Cape Town will bring awareness and action to the intersection between violence against women (VAW) and health from November 25 - December 10 as part of this year's Regional 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women Campaign.

VAW is an epidemic – why? Because one in three women globally will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. There is arguably no other health problem as pervasively affecting women today. This rate is even higher in sub-Saharan Africa with nearly 1 in 2 African women experiencing violence¹. The health consequences of this violence are significant; women who have experienced violence are up to three times more likely to be infected with HIV than those who have not². The effects of violence do not only have an impact on the health of the individual and the family but also the health of economies. In Uganda the cost of domestic violence was estimated at \$2.5 million in 2007³. In South Africa, this figure is as staggeringly high as 40 billion Rand, or \$3.6 billion in 2012/2013⁴.

Violence against women is often accepted, ignored or even expected — this is an injustice. Silence around violence further perpetuates it. The 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women is an annual global event that calls for collective action worldwide to prevent this widespread and universal epidemic. It spans significant dates including the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (November 25th), World AIDS Day (December 1st) and Human Rights Day (December 10th). These dates were selected to symbolically link violence against women to escalating HIV infection rates and human rights abuses.

“There is still a long way to go. We need dedicated financing for women and HIV.” – Dr. Nduku Kilonzo, Director, National AIDS Control Council, Kenya

“The health of women, the health of families and communities require an end to violence against women; we call on policymakers to take action now” Tina Musuya, Executive Director, Center For Domestic Violence Prevention, Uganda.

1 <http://genderviolence.lshtm.ac.uk/files/VAW-report-AFTER-EMBARGOED-complete-document.pdf>

2 http://www.businessfightsaids.org/system/documents/category_1/363/Gender%20Based%20Violence%20Issue%20Brief.pdf?1345232726

3 http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/pressmaterials/unite_the_situation_en.pdf

4 <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-10-06-what-will-it-take-for-the-state-to-act-against-gender-based-violence>

Over the 16-day period, hundreds of organizations across Africa who are members of the GBV Prevention Network will engage their communities under the regional theme “The Silent Epidemic: Violence against Women. Is Your Voice Being Heard?” The theme highlights the dangerous relationship between violence against women and negative mental and physical health outcomes, which affect women as well as their families and communities.

The Regional 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women Campaign seeks to influence policy makers and health workers to move to action to help achieve the goal of all women living healthy lives that are free from violence. During this campaign, activists will lobby policy makers and other leaders to raise their voices for the implementation of a multi-sector approach to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. All members of the GBV Prevention Network call on leaders to:

- 1. Show leadership.** Recognize violence against women and girls as an important health and development barrier and allocate the sufficient resources to prevent and respond to violence.
- 2. Create Equality.** Change national and local level laws, policies and institutions that sustain inequality between women and men.
- 3. Change Norms.** Invest in local violence prevention programming, to promote gender equitable social norms, non-violence behaviors, and effective non-stigmatizing responses for violence survivors
- 4. Challenge Sectors.** Strengthen the role of sectors (health, security, education, justice), including integrating training, allocating budgets, creating policies and implementing systems to identify and support survivors, as part of a co-ordinated multi-sectoral response.
- 5. Invest in research and programming.** Support research and programming organizations to learn how best to prevent and respond to VAWG⁵.

During 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, intense activity and conversation will create a wave of movement and positive change across the region. When individuals raise their voices in unison, we can be more clearly heard thus breaking the silence and the injustice that is violence against women. **How will your voice be heard?**

5 Raising Voices, “16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women Activism Call to Action 2014”