

**16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
TO PREVENT VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN
MEDIA TALKING
POINTS**

**VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN**

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

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is arguably the biggest threat to women's health. Breaking the silence is the first step to ending the epidemic. The media plays a prominent role in shaping knowledge, attitudes and practices in our society. If we are deliberate in our interaction and engagement with the media during the 16 Days Campaign then we can use this influential force to initiate critical thinking and discussion around the widespread epidemic of violence against women – thus breaking the silence.

In addition to raising public awareness, the media plays an important role in holding leaders and policy makers accountable by providing information to the general public about legislation and government action or inaction on the issue of violence against women. Through the media we can begin to shape the attitudes of health workers, policy makers and society as a whole to understand the serious health consequence of violence against women, for individual women, for families, communities and society as a whole. We cannot afford to remain silent.

Talking points are a good way to articulate the main ideas of the campaign clearly, concisely and with one voice. Use the talking points below to guide your interactions with the media, during the 16 Days Campaign. Share, review and pick points relevant to your media program to maintain a clear strong theme!

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

- Violence against women and girls greatly increases a woman's vulnerability to a range of short and long-term health problems; violence against women is arguably the biggest threat to women's health
 - Violence leads to both physical to mental health problems in women and their children and can be a contributing factor to the following health conditions:
 - Unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions
 - Adverse pregnancy outcomes such as miscarriage, pre-eclampsia and stillbirth
 - Gynecological disorders
 - Low birth-weight in babies and increased child mortality rates
 - Increased HIV/ STIs risk
 - Anxiety, depression and substance abuse
 - Death

- Violence against women and girls is a wide-ranging and systemic epidemic
 - Inequality between women and girls is seen as normal and reinforced by our relationships, families, communities, institutions and laws further causing violence against women
 - Because of this historical injustice violence against women and girls requires urgent and specific attention.

- Violence against women negatively impacts the health of individual women, as well as families, communities and societies.
 - Children of women experiencing abuse have higher levels of infant and child mortality and are more likely to suffer from learning, emotional and behavioral problems
 - Violence against women is a problem that is cyclical in nature; children who witness or experience violence have a higher chance of experiencing or using violence in adulthood

- Health care providers have a critical role to play in preventing and responding to violence against women and can take the following steps to break the silence:
 - Health care providers can play a preventive role by providing information on the dangers of violence against women, its health consequences and encouraging safe and equal relationships
 - Health care providers can ask women about violence against women. They can be non-judgmental and supportive to women by listening and empathizing. They can provide quality referrals
 - Given their experience with survivors of violence against women, health providers can play a role in giving a voice to the silent epidemic by advocating and raising awareness of the health burdens of violence against women as well as offering recommendations on appropriate health sector responses

- The stigma surrounding violence often prevents women from seeking health care and reinforces silence; policy makers and health care providers can play an important role in minimizing stigma and increasing health seeking behavior:
 - Ministries of health can play a role in minimizing stigma by ensuring that violence screening and counseling is a mandatory element of training curricula for healthcare providers
 - Policy makers can break the silence by pressuring their governments to develop stigma reduction frameworks and accompanying monitoring and accountability systems
 - Health care centers can develop protocols that ensure privacy and confidentiality by providing private consultation rooms, maintaining secure document storage, and strictly enforcing practices that maintain confidentiality and do not label patients as victims of violence
 - By understanding the links between violence and health, health providers can share information with clients and provide appropriate care

- Policy makers and other leaders also have an important role to play including
 - **Showing Leadership:** recognize violence as an important barrier to health and development, publically condemn violence and allocate the necessary resources to prevent and respond to violence.
 - **Create Equality:** by developing and enforcing national level laws, implement policies and strengthen capacities of institutions to address violence against women and promote equality between women and men.
 - **Change Norms:** invest in violence prevention programming, to promote the empowerment of women, gender equitable norms, non-violent behaviors and effective non-stigmatizing responses for violence survivors.
 - **Challenge Sectors:** strengthen the role of the sectors (health, security, education, justice etc.) by integrating training on violence against women into curricula, allocating budgets, creating policies and implementing systems to identify and support survivors as part of a coordinated multi-sectoral response.
 - **Invest in Research and Programming:** support research and programming to learn how to best prevent and respond to violence against women, inform policies and monitor progress.