

## 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE November 25 - December 10, 2007



### Overcoming Challenges and Dismantling Obstacles

The 2007 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence dedicates this year's theme to overcoming challenges and obstacles that hinder the progress of activists, networks and organizations that campaign to end all forms of violence against women. In collaboration with others, the 16 Days Campaign seeks to help dismantle barriers posed by social attitudes and policies that condone and perpetuate gender based violence.

This year's Campaign focuses on:

#### **Demanding and securing adequate funding for work against violence against women**

Resources are an essential component in determining the scale and sustainability of any program of work on this issue. A lack of adequate resources can cause organizations, networks and activists to limit their visions about what is possible in their advocacy or to downsize their programs. It can also prevent them from being able to bring necessary support, including personnel, on board to deliver goals and can generally undermine their ability to achieve results and to remain sustainable.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence demands that greater resources be allocated at international, national and local levels to advocacy toward prevention and eradication of violence against women.

- ❖ The 2008 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will focus on “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”. For more information see: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/critical.htm>.
- ❖ For many years, women have sought a stronger “gender architecture” within the UN, with more resources going toward programming on gender equality and the human rights of women. The current “Gender Equality Architecture Reform in the UN” campaign (GEAR), calls for “ambitious” government funding for the new women’s organization that hopefully will be created in the UN reform process. For more information on the GEAR campaign, and for ideas about lobbying your government, see <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/policy/unadvocacy/gea.html>
- ❖ The “Women Won’t Wait: End HIV and Violence Against Women. NOW.” campaign calls on advocates, service providers and world leaders to recognize the intersections between violence against women and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It demands that proper resources be committed by governments and other major donors to address the links between these human rights and public health crises. For more information see <http://www.womenwontwait.org>.
- ❖ The UN Secretary General issued a study in October 2006 entitled “*Ending violence against women: from words to action*”, that outlines the critical need for significant funding to be allocated by States and the UN system to address, prevent and end violence against women. To see the executive summary of the study, including its recommendations, please visit <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/launch/english/v.a.w-exeE-use.pdf>.

Whether international, regional, national or local, you can demand greater resources wherever it impacts your work the most.

## **Calling for greater accountability and political commitment from states to prevent and punish all forms of violence against women in practice, not just in words**

### **What does this mean in practical terms?**

- ❖ In order to prevent and address violence against women effectively, it is important for States to follow through on commitments they have made over the years. In her report on “due diligence”, Yakin Ertuk, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, pushes the boundaries of what has traditionally been considered means for states to demonstrate that they are meeting their obligations to end VAW. She sets a higher standard for States to follow in order to demonstrate these commitments. For more information see: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/women/rapporteur/thematic.htm>
- ❖ A critical component of a State’s commitment to ending VAW must come through the development and implementation of policies and practices that prevent women from being at risk of violence, and which punish violent acts through the use of proper legislation. Implementation of appropriate policies and procedures requires the allocation of proper funds and resources, as well as a systematic and mandatory program of gender-sensitivity training for law enforcement officials and the judiciary. It also requires States not to use “cultural defense” arguments to justify why VAW is perpetuated, and address harmful practices head on. The UN Secretary General’s report “*Ending violence against women: from words to action*” outlines recommendations of steps States must take to meet the commitment required to end VAW. To review the recommendations, please visit: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/launch/english/v.a.w-exeE-use.pdf>.

Demanding accountability from States is a key component of advocacy to end violence against women. Our “Suggested Actions” section of this Take Action Kit offers ideas about how to hold governments accountable and highlight these issues during the 2007 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

## **Increasing awareness of the impact of violence against women, including engaging men and boys in prevention and other eradication efforts**

### **What role can I play in ending VAW?**

- ❖ It is important to continue to raise awareness about the impact of violence against women so that more groups, communities and leaders prioritize this as a program of work that deserves attention and resources. Awareness helps to break down myths and stereotypes that are sometimes used to justify violence, and it also allows those at risk of violence to be able to better understand how they can protect themselves and those around them.
- ❖ In addition to empowering women and girls to protect themselves, it is essential to address sources, and perpetrators of violence, whether actual or potential. This requires hands-on engagement with men and boys to help shift attitudes about the use of violence and to empower

men as responsible agents of change. Through this kind of outreach work, harmful societal norms can be challenged and a healthier construction of masculinity – which doesn't subjugate women - can be created.

During this 16 Days Campaign, you may want to use the resources shared in the Bibliography of the Take Action Kit to raise awareness and engage men to end violence against women.

## **D. Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of work to prevent violence against women**

### **Does this mean evaluating myself or others?**

- ❖ In order to ensure that efforts to end violence against women are effective, it is essential for all those working in this field to engage in evaluations of our own efforts. This includes reviewing our own groups' capacity, allocation of resources and program of work. Evaluations allow networks and organizations to identify what resources are needed to help them deliver their goals effectively. They are also tools that allow projects to be tracked and strategies to be reshaped based on indicators and milestones. Self evaluations help foster the positive growth of organizations as well as the development of strategic plans.
- ❖ Evaluations are also good tools to use to determine whether projects and services delivered by donors, international agencies, governments and service providers meet the needs of women and incorporate a gender analysis. This form of evaluation is an excellent benchmark against which women's organizations can measure the impact and influence of their own work as well as determine what additional efforts may be needed. These evaluations can be used as tools for advocacy, as they highlight the need to remedy gaps and inconsistencies between what anti-violence advocates call for and what states, donors, and other sources are actually providing.

Talk to other activists, networks and organizations during the 16 Days Campaign to find out what models of evaluation may work best for you. If you have already developed a good model for evaluation, please share it with others and with us too!

## **E. Securing the space for advocacy and defending the defenders of women's human rights in ending gender based violence.**

### **Why specifically women human rights defenders?**

There are thousands of human rights defenders across the world who face great risk while conducting their work to advance all human rights. Women defenders, in particular, often face additional risks, including specific forms of gender based violence. In 2005, an international campaign on women human rights defenders was launched, entitled "Defending Women, Defending Rights". As the campaign explains, women human rights defenders, as well as all people who defend the rights of women, experience:

- ❖ Shared risks, in terms of being targeted for violations. While the abuses themselves may be the same as those experienced by male colleagues, such as arbitrary arrest or torture, women defenders are often at risk because of their advocacy, whether it is gender or sexuality-related or not, simply because they are defending rights.
- ❖ Gender-specific risks facing women defenders, which are perpetrated because the defenders are women, or that have disproportionate impact because they are women (for instance, sexual abuse or harassment, and violations from husbands/male partners and male colleagues, in addition to violations by the State).
- ❖ Risks due to their work on women-specific rights/issues. WHRDs also face heightened risks precisely because of their work on gender equality and women-specific rights/issues. Because this advocacy frequently challenges discriminatory cultural, political and religious norms, women defenders and those defending women's rights often face high levels of hostility from the community as well as the state.

For more information on this campaign, visit:

<http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/index.php>

Ensuring the protection of human rights defenders and the protection of advocacy for women's human rights is crucial to eliminating all forms of violence against women. Participate in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and help to support Women Human Rights Defenders around the world!