Factsheet 1: The 16 Days of Activism Campaign

What is it?

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign begins from the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November and ends with International Human Rights Day on 10 December – highlighting that violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights.

During the 16 Days of Activism, people around the world unite to raise awareness about gender-based violence, challenge discriminatory attitudes and call for improved laws and services to end violence against women for good.

A short history of the campaign

In the Dominican Republic on 25 November 1960, sisters and political activists Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa Mirabal were killed on orders from the dictatorship government.

The sisters became symbols of the feminist resistance, and in commemoration of their deaths 25 November was declared International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in Latin America. In June 1991, the Centre for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), alongside participants of the first Women's Global Institute on Women, Violence and Human Rights, called for a global campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. In 1999 25 November was recognised as a UN International Day.

It has since become an important time for organisations and individuals around the world to raise awareness that women's rights are human rights, and that violence against women is a fundamental violation of those rights.

Why does it matter?

Violence against women continues to occur at an alarming scale in every country in the world. Too often it is accepted as normal behaviour and the global culture of discrimination against women allows violence to occur with impunity.

Calls for action like 16 days of Activism are crucial because they shine a spotlight on the issue of violence against women.

Speaking out against women's rights abuses is something that feminist and women's rights organisations, including IWDA, do every day. From lobbying governments to improve laws and services to working with communities to change discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, organisations and individuals are working all over the world to respond to and prevent violence against women. Campaigns like 16 Days of Activism are an opportunity to amplify our advocacy and boldly say what needs to change to prevent it from happening in the first place at the local, national, regional and global level.

Violence against women is not inevitable; it is preventable.

Who should take part?

Violence against women is a global problem and it requires global action. That's why we *all* have a role to play in preventing gender-based violence.

We need to challenge the attitudes that perpetuate, rationalise and normalise this kind of violence and deny women's right to safety and respect. Within this, men have an important role to play in challenging harmful masculine stereotypes and behaviours.

Shifting these behaviours is hard and slow, but gender equality means all of us working together to achieve true, systemic change. Our voices are a critical part of this global movement.

Together, we must call on governments, organisations and people everywhere to speak out against violence.

