



16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence
25 November - 10 December 2026
UNiTE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS:
ENSURE JUSTICE, PROTECT SURVIVORS, END IMPUNITY

CONCEPT NOTE

1. BACKGROUND

The **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence** is a global civil society-led campaign that runs from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, International Human Rights Day, highlighting that violence against women is the most pervasive breach of human rights worldwide. Launched in 1991 by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute, it has mobilized individuals, civil society, governments and international organizations to advocate for the elimination of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

In support of this civil society initiative, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), launched the [UNiTE Campaign](#), a multi-year effort that calls upon governments, civil society, young people, the private sector, media, and the UN system to join forces to end violence against women and girls. This year, building on the [strategic outcomes of the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW70), the [UNSG's Gender Equality Acceleration Plan](#) and on the 2025 UNiTE campaign's focus on digital violence, the **UNiTE campaign** focuses on three critical and mutually reinforcing elements needed to end violence against women and girls: **ensuring justice, protecting survivors and ending impunity across online and offline spaces.**

2. GLOBAL CONTEXT

VAWG continues to be the most urgent and pervasive human rights violation, resulting in serious harm to individual women, families, communities and broader society. Significant progress has been made over the last [30 years](#), including through strengthened laws, services and prevention strategies. While only 12 countries addressed domestic violence in their laws in 1995, [this number had grown to 104 by 2025](#). The 30th anniversary review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action shows that actions to improve access to justice were a priority for 77 per cent of States in the past five years. Despite this, however, the world is failing to eliminate violence against women, which continues to persist at alarming rates across the world, with [one in three women](#) experiencing violence in their lifetime. Deeply entrenched stereotypes, harmful social norms, weak implementation and/or regression of laws, and inadequate resources, are impeding progress. Global crises, conflicts, and climate change are further intensifying the drivers of VAWG.

Global evidence indicates that the majority of women who experience violence do not seek help or support to stop it. Globally, [only one out of three women \(31.82%\) who experience violence seek help of any sort](#). In the majority of countries with available data on this issue, among women who do seek help, most look to family and friends and very few look to formal institutions, such as the police and health services. [Less than one in ten women \(9.2%\) appeal to the police](#). The police and justice sectors' responses are uneven and often do not function at the level required to address the severity, nature and extent of the different forms of gender-based violence; protect the well-being and ensure the safety of victims and survivors; facilitate women's access to justice; and hold perpetrators accountable. The rapid development of digital technologies has intensified VAWG and created new forms of harm, while [outpacing the ability of service providers across every region of the world to adapt to these developments](#).

[Significant barriers continue to hamper the implementation and enforcement of laws](#). These include a lack of resources; limited information available to women and girls about where and how to access services, and institutional cultures, practices and gender stereotypes within male-dominated sectors such as security, police and justice institutions. Women in rural and remote areas and women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination and violence encounter significant challenges, including long distances to access law enforcement personnel and courts, as well as linguistic and cultural barriers. [About one in five countries \(22%\) report providing](#)

[legal aid assistance in VAWG cases](#), an important service for enhancing access to justice for VAWG victims and survivors.

Once women access police and court services, **impunity remains a significant problem**. Crimes involving violence against women are among the most under-reported and [the least likely to end in conviction](#). Even when survivors report violence to the police, many do not see their cases lead to prosecution or conviction. This gap between reporting and justice is often called a “justice gap” or “attrition,” and it is [especially severe in cases of sexual assault and rape](#).

[Funding cuts are significantly reducing access to protection and critical support](#) for victims and survivors, while growing impunity is leaving survivors at risk of further and intensifying violence. 89 per cent of surveyed women’s rights organizations reported that **funding cuts are leading to a high or severe reduction in women and girls’ access to support services** for survivors, and 59 per cent perceive **an increase in impunity and the normalization of violence**.

Successful strategies to address these obstacles include institutional reforms, such as [increasing women’s representation in law enforcement](#); strengthening accountability and oversight; investing in continuous capacity-building for law enforcement actors; adopting survivor-centred standards and protocols, and improving inter-sectoral coordination. [Addressing structural and gender-based institutional practices remains essential, particularly](#) within security, police and judicial sectors. In parallel, digital tools -such as online reporting platforms, remote case-management systems, and technology-enabled referral pathways- are expanding access to services and improving institutional responsiveness. These efforts can contribute to more gender-responsive and survivor-centred responses - which in turn - help to ensure the safety of women and girls, minimize their risk of revictimization, facilitate access to justice and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

The CSW70 Agreed Conclusions reaffirmed that ending violence against women requires stronger laws and justice delivery systems; survivor-centred services, including legal aid, shelters, psychosocial support and crisis responses; and accountability for perpetrators, including through prosecution, the rule of law, responsible media engagement and action on digital violence and AI governance. Ultimately, a quality police and justice response, especially for those who are most marginalized and at higher risk of experiencing violence, is crucial to ensure that relevant laws meet international and regional standards and are enforced; keep women and girls safe from violence, including the recurrence of violence; hold perpetrators accountable; and provide effective reparations for victims and survivors.

3. 2026 CAMPAIGN’S FRAMING AND ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES

The 2026 UNiTE campaign positions access to justice for women girls who are victims and survivors of violence as a collective responsibility, requiring multi-stakeholder partnerships among governments, justice sector actors, community systems, technology companies, media, UN agencies, and funders. Anchored in the [Beijing+30 Action Agenda on Zero Violence](#) and the [Agreed Conclusions of CSW70](#), the campaign calls for action across three mutually reinforcing pillars: ensure justice, protect survivors and end impunity. The campaign seeks to accelerate decisive action towards achieving the **2030 Agenda**, particularly SDG 5, with only three years remaining until 2030.

- **Ensure justice through stronger laws and justice delivery.** Promote law reform and comprehensive laws criminalizing all forms of VAWG and support gender- and age-responsive justice systems to effectively investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases, ensuring accountability and contributing to an end to impunity.
- **Protect survivors through comprehensive, survivor-centred services.** Expand legal education and legal aid; resource emergency shelters, protection measures, psychosocial and mental health support; and ensure gender-responsive justice and services in crisis and humanitarian settings.

- **End impunity and uphold the rule of law.** Strengthen investigation, prosecution and adjudication of VAWG cases; promote effective reparations; reinforce institutional accountability and oversight; and engage media and public voices to challenge the normalization of violence and support accountability.
- **Invest in digital public infrastructure (DPI) and technology to strengthen survivor-centred responses and access to justice,** including through the development of gender-inclusive DPI that can be replicated and scaled up and the promotion of responsible, innovation-driven solutions by the tech sector.
- **Enhance legal empowerment and digital literacy.** Improve women's and girls' awareness of their rights, justice mechanisms and reporting pathways, including in digital contexts, particularly for those facing intersecting forms of discrimination.
- **Transform institutions and community norms.** Invest in evidence-based solutions that address stereotypes, bias and patriarchal practices within law enforcement, justice systems, media and communities, and transform the formal and informal systems, norms and practices that perpetuate discrimination and abusive behaviors.
- **Support women's rights organizations and feminist movements.** Increase core, flexible and long-term funding to sustain survivor services, legal empowerment, community justice work, monitoring of justice systems, and advocacy for accountability and an end to impunity.

Within this framework, the 2026 UNiTE communications campaign will translate the theme of access to justice into a public-facing call to action centred on the campaign's three pillars: ensuring justice, protecting survivors and ending impunity. It will link prevention, law reform, survivor protection and accountability across online and offline forms of violence for a broad audience.

4. SUGGESTED CAMPAIGN TACTICS AND KEY ACTIVITIES FOR THE 2026 UNiTE CAMPAIGN

Throughout the 16 Days, partners are encouraged to carry out bold, visible actions to amplify the 2026 campaign theme *"UNiTE to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Ensure Justice, Protect Survivors, End Impunity."*

- **Champion Justice and Positive Norms:** Speak out against victim-blaming and harmful stereotypes, support survivors in all their diversity, and mobilize men, boys and influential leaders to promote accountability, respectful behaviours, and safe, inclusive spaces online and offline.
- **Advocate for Change:** Organize dialogues, forums and policy roundtables to push for law reform, justice delivery, survivor-centred services; digital accountability and an end to impunity.
- **Amplify Public Debate:** Engage media, influencers, survivors and those with lived experience to spark conversations about justice gaps, impunity, online violence, accountability and the rule of law.
- **Expand Access to Justice and Digital Safety:** Promote survivor-centred, trauma-informed and safety-by-design approaches while strengthening legal and digital literacy, including awareness of rights, reporting mechanisms, support services, and the safe use of technology.
- **Strengthen Women's Movements:** Support and fund frontline organizations that provide legal aid, psychosocial support, and advocacy for survivors seeking justice and accountability.
- **Use the colour orange:** Partners are encouraged to use the **colour orange** through clothing, buildings, events, and digital spaces—to symbolize unity and raise awareness throughout the 16 Days.

5. MAIN PRINCIPLES OF THE UNiTE CAMPAIGN

1. **Survivor-Centred:** Apply do-no-harm principles; prioritize survivors' safety, dignity, consent, and confidentiality and ensure safeguards against re-traumatization online and offline.
2. **Inclusive and Intersectional:** Ensure meaningful participation of women and girls in their diversity, including Indigenous women, women with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ people, among others.
3. **Safety:** Promote rights-based off online and offline safety, accountability, and access to justice.

4. **Accountability:** Uphold the rule of law, support prosecution and reparations, hold perpetrators accountable and challenge impunity.
5. **Youth Leadership:** Elevate the voices of young feminists and youth-led organizations.
6. **Honour Feminist Movements:** Centre their voices and leadership, including the voices of survivors.
7. **Transformative:** Address the root causes of VAWG, including harmful norms and masculinities.
8. **Collaborative:** Leverage a UN system-wide approach and multi-stakeholder partnerships with key actors.

For more information about the campaign, please visit [UNITE to End Violence against Women Campaign](#), which will be updated regularly.