

# Gender-Based Violence Newsletter

November 25th, 2002

## Women, Health and Development Program Pan-American Health Organization

*"...violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace..."*

*"...violence against women constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms..."*

*"...violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men..."*

*"...there is a need for a clear and comprehensive definition of violence against women, a clear statement of the rights to be applied to ensure the elimination of violence against women in all its forms, a commitment by States in respect of their responsibilities, and a commitment by the international community at large to the elimination of violence against women..."*

United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1994

On November 25th, 2002 the world will commemorate the **United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**, with the knowledge that gender-based violence in all its forms still constitutes the most widespread violation of women's human rights.

The day was first established in Latin America and the Caribbean in 1981, as a way to commemorate the deaths of the Mirabal sisters, Patria, Minerva and Maria-Teresa, who were brutally assassinated for conspiring against the Trujillo dictatorship. Since then the day has been used in the LAC region to remember the Mirabal sisters, and to raise awareness about the existence of gender-based violence. In 1999, at the request of the Dominican Republic and with the support of 74 other countries, the day was declared an official UN observance.

November 25th also marks the beginning of the **16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence**, initiated by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership as a campaign to address the connections between women, violence and human rights. The 16 days continue until December 10th, World Human Rights Day, and encompass Dec 1st, World AIDS Day, and December 6th, the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre.

Gender-based violence occurs across the world, regardless of socio-economic status, age, cultural or religious affiliation, and existence of laws or services. Though a number of international conventions, statements

and declarations on violence against women exist, the problem has only recently become an international priority, now recognized by much of the world as a significant public health problem which accounts for 7% of deaths among women aged 15-44.

As stated in the recently released WHO World Report on Violence and Health, in some countries up to 69% of women report having been physically assaulted by an intimate male partner, and up to 47% of women report that their first sexual encounter was forced.

*"These findings challenge us,"* said Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, director of the WHO. *"Forty years of work to improve women's lives have given very uneven results. The majority of women in the world still suffer from poverty, discrimination and violence. Yet some countries have overcome this situation, and there is no reason why we can't replicate these successes."*

The publication of the WHO report coincides with the launch of the Global Campaign for Violence Prevention, which aims to identify violence as a public health problem, highlighting the role that the health sector can play in prevention of and attention to violence. Belgium, Costa Rica, Brazil, Colombia, the Philippines, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Mozambique and South Africa, among others, will be hosting events to launch the WHO report, address the incidence and implications of violence in their countries, and discuss ways of implementing the report's recommendations.

*Gender-Based Violence is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life".*

United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1992.

Around the world, governments, international organizations and civil society groups will observe November 25th with ceremonies, presentations, seminars, discussions, and official declarations. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), will launch their **Call to the World to End Violence against Women** with the slogan "Not a Minute More." The campaign simultaneously recognizes the efforts and accomplishments that have been made in the struggle against gender-based violence, while reminding the world

that it remains a critical problem for women everywhere and that continued efforts and support will be needed to eliminate it.

As Dr. Bruntland states: "*We need to voice the violence, to hear the stories of all those affected by violence. Spreading the word, breaking down the taboos and exposing the violence that takes place among us is the first step towards effective action to reduce violence in our own societies*"

---

## INFORMATION RESOURCES

- **History of November 25th** - <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/news/vawd.html>
- **The WHO World Report on Violence and Health**
  - Chapter 4 - "Intimate Partner Violence"
  - Chapter 6 - "Sexual Violence"
  - [http://www5.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/main.cfm?p=0000000682](http://www5.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/main.cfm?p=0000000682)

### Campaigns

- **The UNIFEM "Not a Minute More" Campaign**  
[http://www.unifem.org/newsroom/events/november\\_25th.html](http://www.unifem.org/newsroom/events/november_25th.html)
- **UN Inter-Agency Campaign - "A Life Free of Violence, It's Our Right"**  
<http://www.undp.org/rblac/gender/>
- **16 Day of Activism against Gender Violence Campaign**  
<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days02/index.html>
- **White Ribbon Campaign**  
<http://www.whiteribbon.ca>

### Conventions and Declarations

- **Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of BELEM DO PARA)**  
<http://www.undp.org/rblac/gender/osavio.htm>
- **Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women**  
[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.RES.48.104.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.RES.48.104.En?Opendocument)
- **United Nations Millennium Declaration**  
Article V, Par. 25 "To combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women."  
<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>