



OFFICIAL COMMEMORATION OF THE 2023 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

CALL TO ACTION

“UNiTE! Invest to Prevent Violence against Women & Girls!”

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains alarmingly high in every sphere of their lives, whether private, public, or online. Each year, [245 million women and girls](#) aged 15 and older globally experience physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner.¹ In 2022, nearly [89,000 women and girls](#) worldwide were killed intentionally, the highest yearly number recorded in the past two decades. Conflict and crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, further increase the risk of violence against women and girls. Violence against women and girls is becoming more ‘normalized’ in some countries as pushback intensifies against efforts to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. However, there is nothing normal about this violence.

Every incident can have a profound and lasting impact on survivors’ lives, as well as impacting their families, children, communities, and society. The global cost of violence against women is huge - estimated to be at least [USD 1.5 trillion](#) or approximately 2 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP). Yet its impact is often invisible or ignored, when instead it should be featured and funded at the highest levels of the political agenda.

We have robust evidence that VAWG is preventable, yet financial commitments to that prevention remain scant, short-term, and unevenly distributed. Less than 0.2 per cent of the USD 204 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) is directed towards VAWG prevention,² with some regions missing out on prevention investment altogether.³ Moreover, little is known about existing investments in prevention, due to the lack of consistent monitoring of national budgets.

We urgently need a more effective global response.

We know how to achieve real, widespread, and sustained impact. We need national action plans that are resourced and have clear multi-sectoral roles and responsibilities, enforcement of legislation and policies, and quality survivor-centred essential services for all women and girls in all contexts. We also need funding to support a sustained scale-up of evidence-based prevention strategies, such as those guided by the multi-agency [RESPECT women Framework](#), the [What Works](#) Programme, or the work of the [Spotlight Initiative](#).

The Spotlight Initiative has engaged 2 million men and boys on positive masculinity and mobilized grass-roots efforts to transform harmful social and discriminatory gender norms, attitudes, and beliefs. With its support, 43 countries have strengthened their National Action Plans to eliminate gender-based violence. Through adopting a comprehensive, whole-of-society approach that invests deeply in both civil society and governments, the Initiative is also on track to prevent 21 million women and girls from experiencing violence by 2025.

We need to further invest in and strengthen new partnerships, including with non-traditional partners. Platforms such as the [Generation Equality Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition](#) are unlocking political will and fostering significant gender-responsive investments. In 2023, commitment makers reported over USD 5 billion in financial pledges and over 600 programmes being implemented to address gender-based violence.⁴

As part of the Secretary-General’s UNiTE campaign this year, we call for sustained political commitment from all our partners across the whole of government, civil society, academia, and the private sector. We also call for increased domestic financing, ODA, and private and philanthropic financing, at local, national, and regional levels, to drive down the prevalence of VAWG, including in humanitarian settings. And we call for the scale-up and support that will ensure a well-resourced and resilient women’s movement, with long-term, core and flexible funding for women’s rights and women-led organizations.

¹ Calculation is based on WHO estimates, see: [Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates \(who.int\)](#)

² This is the estimated yearly average investment in GBV prevention (USD 410 million) as a percentage share of overall ODA in 2022 (USD 204 billion), from the report on [‘What Counts? The state of funding for the prevention of gender-based violence against women and girls’](#) by The Accelerator for GBV Prevention and The Equality Institute (2023).

³ Ibid.

⁴ [Accountability Report of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence](#), UN Women (2023).

The time to accelerate action is now. It will take dedicated and bold investment for countries to achieve the sustainable development target of eliminating VAWG by the end of this decade. The costs of inaction are too great.

Today, we call upon everyone, to unite and invest, to prevent violence against women and girls.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs



International Development Law Organization



United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

[The Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women \(EDVAW Platform\)](#)



Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



United Nations Development Programme



Spotlight Initiative



United Nations Population Fund



World Health Organization



United Nations Children's Fund