

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE  
ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
25 November 2011**

Violence against women and girls takes many forms and is widespread throughout the globe. It includes rape, domestic violence, harassment at work, abuse in school, female genital mutilation and sexual violence in armed conflicts. It is predominantly inflicted by men. Whether in developing or developed countries, the pervasiveness of this violence should shock us all. Violence – and in many cases the mere threat of it – is one of the most significant barriers to women’s full equality.

The right of women and girls to live free of violence is inalienable and fundamental. It is enshrined in international human rights and humanitarian law. And it lies at the heart of my UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign. Since its launch in 2008, the campaign has galvanized governments, civil society, the corporate sector, athletes, artists, women, men and young people around the world. The social mobilization platform “Say NO-UNiTE” has recorded more than 2 million activities worldwide – from protest marches to public awareness campaigns, from legislative advocacy to help for victims.

Many of these activities have received support from the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Since it was founded 15 years ago, the Fund has delivered grants worth \$77 million to 339 initiatives in 126 countries and territories. We would like the Fund to be able to do even more, but demand for support continues to outstrip resources. This year alone, the Fund has received more than 2,500 applications requesting nearly \$1.2 billion. I appeal to all our partners to help us meet this vast unmet need.

Our challenge is to ensure that the message of "zero tolerance" is heard far and wide. To do that, we must engage all of society – and especially young people. In particular, young men and boys must be encouraged to become the advocates we need. We need to promote healthy models of masculinity. Too many young men still grow up surrounded by outmoded male stereotypes. By talking to friends and peers about violence against women and girls, and by taking action to end it, they can help break the ingrained behaviour of generations.

On this International Day, I urge governments and partners around the world to harness the energy, ideas and leadership of young people to help us to end this pandemic of violence. Only then will we have a more just, peaceful and equitable world.