



## Orange Day, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2017

### Violence against Older Women

#### BACKGROUND

The 25<sup>th</sup> of every month has been designated “Orange Day” by the [United Nations Secretary-General’s Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women](#), to raise awareness and take action to end violence against women and girls. As a bright and optimistic colour, orange represents a future free from violence against women and girls for the UNiTE Campaign. Orange Day calls upon civil society, governments, and UN partners to mobilize people and highlight issues relevant to preventing and ending violence against women and girls, not only once a year on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November), but every month.

In 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through its 17 goals, the 2030 Agenda calls for global action over the next 15 years to address the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. All the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) are fully integrated with one another and therefore we cannot think of them in isolation.

SDG 5 recognizes gender equality and the empowerment of women as a key priority pledging that “no one will be left behind.” Building on this vision, throughout 2017, the UNiTE Campaign will mark all Orange Days (25<sup>th</sup> of every month) under the overarching theme **“Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls”** to underscore its commitment towards reaching the most underserved.

## ORANGE DAY

For this Orange Day, 25 September 2017, the UNiTE Campaign has teamed up with AARP to put a spotlight on the issue of **Violence against Older Women**, recognizing that women remain at risk for violence throughout their lives.

**Physical, sexual and psychological violence, financial exploitation, neglect and other forms of violence against older women are widespread yet mostly hidden.** It occurs in multiple, often-intersecting forms by varying perpetrators, including intimate partners or spouses, family members, caregivers (both in and outside of institutional settings), or members of their community.<sup>1</sup>

Older women face a greater risk of physical and psychological abuse than older men due to discriminatory societal attitudes and the non-realization of the human rights of women. Despite policies and programmes adopted by many countries at the national level, reports of incidents of violence against older women have grown at an alarming rate.<sup>2</sup> Some harmful traditional and customary practices, such as the denial of land inheritance rights to widows<sup>3</sup>, result in abuse and violence directed at older women, often exacerbated by poverty and lack of access to legal protection.<sup>4</sup> Recent findings<sup>5</sup> draw specific attention to incidents of violence and murder of older women following accusations of witchcraft acts embedded in customs and social structures that render older women as targets of their own families and communities. In many countries, institutions established to provide care for older women and men are not managed properly and low standards of care go unchecked.<sup>6</sup>

A major challenge in addressing violence against older women is the lack of reliable, comprehensive data, particularly in vulnerable settings, such as conflict areas or disaster zones, or from marginalized populations, such as immigrant and refugee older women, older women with disabilities, indigenous older women, LBT older women, and others. One of the few prevalence studies to focus on violence

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<sup>1</sup> [Brief on Violence Against Women, Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Resource Guide](#), p. 5

<sup>2</sup> UNDESA (2015) *Report of the Secretary-General "Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing"* [A/70/185](#)

<sup>3</sup> ["You Will Get Nothing" - Violations of Property and Inheritance Rights of Widows in Zimbabwe, Human Rights Watch \(2017\)](#).

<sup>4</sup> [Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, United Nations](#), Paragraph 38

<sup>5</sup> UNDESA (2013) *Report of the Secretary-General "Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing"* <http://undocs.org/A/68/167>

<sup>6</sup> [The World's Women 2015](#), Chapter 6, p. 148

and abuse against older women was conducted in five European Union countries. Results of this study showed that **28% of older women reported experiencing some form of abuse in the previous year** (neglect, emotional, financial, physical, sexual, and/or “violation of rights”). Emotional abuse was the highest-reported category, with 24% reporting this type of abuse in the home in the previous 12 months.<sup>7</sup>

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its commitment to leave no one behind holds promise for greater inclusion of older women. However, this can only be achieved through extending data collection on women subjected to physical and/or sexual violence from the upper age limit of 49 years, which stems from a traditional focus on women in reproductive age, to the age 50 and beyond. Regardless of their age, all women are entitled to a life free from violence and its consequences. Any measure taken to achieve Goal 5 and eliminate all forms of violence against **all** women and girls must include older women—this means including older women in prevention, response, and data collection efforts to monitor prevalence and progress on relevant Goal 5 targets and indicators.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

- The [Violence against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Resource Guide Brief on Violence against Older Women](#), a collaboration among **World Bank Group, Global Women's Institute at George Washington University, Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Center for Research on Women** addresses older age as a risk factor for gender-motivated violence by providing attention to women survivors aged 50 and older. It includes promising practices for development professionals to consider in their work to increase awareness of, and attention to, violence against older women.
- In 2010, the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** adopted its [General Recommendation No. 27](#) on older women and protection of their human rights. Issues related to social pensions, adequate housing, access to education, as well as consent in relation to health or the right to inherit are addressed in this recommendation and compel states parties to address multiple discrimination against older women.

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<sup>7</sup> [Prevalence Study of Abuse and Violence against Older Women: Results of a Multi-cultural Survey Conducted in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Lithuania, and Portugal](#), Finland: National Institute of Health and Welfare (THL)

- *“Victims of elder abuse are more likely to be female and to have a physical disability, be care-dependent, have poor physical or mental health, or both; have low income, and lack social support,”* states the [Aging and Health](#) report by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and outlines a framework for action to foster Healthy Ageing.
- This [toolkit](#), by the **International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse**, provides illustrative resources and sample forms, and links to other organizations to help plan awareness-raising activities and other events on elder abuse.
- The [Women, Ageing and Health Framework for Action](#), a joint publication by **WHO** and the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, addresses the health status and factors that influence women’s health at midlife and older ages with a focus on gender. It provides guidance on how policymakers, practitioners, non-governmental organizations and civil society can improve the health and wellbeing of ageing women by simultaneously applying both a gender and an ageing lens in their policies, programmes and practices, as well as in research.

#### TAKE ACTION THIS **ORANGE DAY!**

- **Policymakers & practitioners**, take a look at this policy brief by UNDP: [Leave No One Behind: Ageing, Gender, and the SDGs](#). It provides guidance on what can be done to integrate both a gender and ageing lens in policy and programming to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including greater attention to older women survivors of gender-based violence.
- **Civil society organizations** working with women and girls, particularly on gender-based violence, can commit to increasing the visibility of older survivors by using age-inclusive language in materials and programming, as well as featuring images of older women in public-facing products. For example, framing gender-based violence as a rights violation that occurs “across the lifespan/life cycle” or calling for the empowerment of women and girls “of all ages.”
- **Organize an awareness-raising event or activity in your community center** to spark a conversation on elder abuse, and late-life intimate partner and sexual violence. This [toolkit](#) provides useful tips and resources to support you in organizing your event!
- **Co-sponsor a lecture, debate, or presentation** on ways to prevent abuse and neglect in later life in a retirement home in your local community.

- This year's [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#) are coming up. **Join us in oranging the world** and start planning our activity ideas. Visit our [website](#) for more information on how to get involved in the Orange the World campaign.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES**

### TWITTER

Violence against older women is widespread and mostly hidden. Find out more: <http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW>  
#OrangeDay

Have you started planning your activities to #endVAW yet? Find out more about this year's Orange the World campaign: <http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW>

This #OrangeDay learn more about this @UNTrustFundEVAW grantee in Peru ending violence against older women: <http://bit.ly/2tKZo4x>

Violence against older women is widespread but often untallied. More data is needed:  
<http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW> @WBG\_Gender #OrangeDay

It's #OrangeDay! @SayNO\_UNiTE & @aarp take a close look at the issue of violence against older women. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW>

In older age, women face a greater risk of abuse than men. Learn more & take action this #OrangeDay  
<http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW>

### FACEBOOK 1

Violence against older women is widespread and mostly hidden. This #OrangeDay, the UNiTE campaign puts a spotlight on the issue of violence against older women. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW> via  
[@SayNO-UNiTE to End Violence against Women]

### FACEBOOK 2

Peru's long-running internal armed conflict has ended, but many women survivors of conflict-related sexual and political violence are still experiencing gender-based violence today. This [@UNTrustFund]

project seeks to reduce gender-based violence against older women who are survivors of conflict-related violence: <http://bit.ly/2tKZo4x> #OrangeDay

### FACEBOOK 3

It's #OrangeDay! This month, [@SayNO-UNiTE to End Violence against Women] is putting a spotlight on the issue of violence against older women. Learn more about the issue and what you can do to help: <http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW> via [@SayNO-UNiTE to End Violence against Women]